

Fidel Castro speaks on Marxism-Leninism

("... I shall be a Marxist-Leninist to the end of my life." December 2, 1961)

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with Foreword and sub-heads added and signed by Richard Gibson.
(Bracketed wording not italicized appear in from the original text)*

(Dowson Archives Ed. note: this speech was given during the infamous "Bay of Pigs-Playa Giron" abortive mercenary invasion sponsored by the US-CIA. It was broadcast throughout Cuba's streets by loudspeakers as well as by radio & TV, and was heard by the editor of this website who was incarcerated along with hapless other stranded tourists in a bungalow in the Havana suburb of Miramar, who heard sections of the speech between the rumbling of tanks and trucks full of Milicianos mobilized en masse against the invasion, which was repulsed in 72 hours.)

FOREWORD

No statement by a world leader has ever been so willfully distorted as Fidel Castro's historic speech of December 2nd, 1961. Made in a Havana television studio during the early hours of the morning and broadcast live over television and radio, the speech is a lengthy and complex analysis of the development of the Cuban Revolution, so frank that it bars comparison. It was not a formal diplomatic utterance of a statesman, but an incredibly sincere and searching account by a tested revolutionary leader of the evolution of his own political thinking. Officially, the speech opened a series of talks to the Cuban people by revolutionary leaders on the organization of the new United Party of the Socialist Revolution. And Fidel takes great pains to outline the political and ideological reasons behind the formation of this new integrated revolutionary party.

The speech was monitored in the Miami bureau of United Press International by a Cuban exile, and at 3:36 a.m., UPI transmitted this dispatch:

"MIAMI, Dec. 2 (UPI) — Cuban Premier Fidel Castro said today he really has been a dedicated Communist since his college days but he concealed his views so it would be easier to seize power."

The Associated Press sent the following, more truthful version from its Havana bureau:
"HAVANA, Dec. 2 (AP) — Declaring he is a Marxist-Leninist opposed to the personality cult, (*a reference to Stalinism – Dowson Archives Ed.*) Fidel Castro said today 'the world is on the road toward communism' and he is taking Cuba down that path... Castro said that as a student at Havana University he was not a Marxist because he was 'influenced by imperialist and reactionary propaganda against the Communists.' "

But, as James Wechsler has pointed out in the *N.Y. Post* of December 14th, the U.S. mass media almost unanimously used the UPI version. Anti-Castro columns and editorials mushroomed across the country. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who should have known better because a hastily prepared U.S. Government translation of the entire speech was available, gleefully

declared that Castro had branded himself a Communist, making the task of the U.S. easier at the forth coming Punta del Este conference. In other words, Rusk hoped to use the speech as part of U.S. propaganda against the Cuban Revolution. As Wechsler commented: "The hard fact is that much of the country has been duped by a misleading report which reflected a sad lack of sophistication in dealing with the intricacies of Communist world politics."

The following translation is offered by the Fair Play for Cuba Committee to the American public, in keeping with FPCC's policy of presenting factual and first-hand information about Cuba and the Cuban Revolution. Thanks to the tireless and painstaking efforts and contributions of numerous persons, FPCC is able to publish this accurate translation of the full text of Fidel Castro's December 2nd speech, a document that must be read and studied by all who want to learn what is really happening in the new Cuba.

One word about the translation: in order to stress accuracy and fidelity to the original, we have kept as close to the Spanish as possible even though this may, at times, mean a certain awkwardness of style.

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FIDEL CASTRO SPEAKS ON MARXISM-LENINISM

Why Is the United Party of the Socialist Revolution a necessity?

I would certainly have liked a little more time to make a serious study of this topic, since the subject of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution is a matter of extraordinary importance to the Revolution. I, therefore, told some of my comrades that I was going to give a sort of provisional talk now, since I expect to return to this question in the future when I have more time to develop it thoroughly.

I am, therefore, simply going to express at this time a series of fundamental ideas with which the United Party of the Revolution is concerned.

In the first place, what is the United Party of the Revolution and why is it being organized? Of course, on previous occasions, in different public ceremonies, we have already referred to this question and have expressed certain ideas about it.

The United Party of the Revolution was, in the first place, a necessity. Why was it a necessity? To begin with, you cannot make a revolution, and above all, you cannot carry a revolution forward without a strong and disciplined organization.

This necessity is becoming more and more evident as the revolutionary process advances and deepens and faces even more difficult tasks.

It has always been said, and rightly so, that it is easier to win power than to hold it; it is easier to win power than to govern.

And that is a great truth. The tasks a revolutionary movement faces in the struggle for power become enormous and multiply the minute that revolutionary movement seizes power. It has also been said in various books, (and we are really reviewing all of the books we have read and studied, seeing that we all studied in places where we often had to learn a lot of foolishness, things of no great importance); it has been said that the harder it is to win power, that is, consolidate it, the easier it is to keep it; that the easier it is to win power, the harder it is to hold on to it.

The only truth there can be in that assertion is basically the following: that it is in the struggle for power that the cadres who will later govern the country are trained. The longer and more protracted the struggle, the greater the number of men it trains capable of later discharging other duties.

To recall briefly the experience, our experience, an experience that was relatively short when compared with much longer struggles which other countries had to wage, armed struggles, as for example in China where the guerillas fought for more than 20 years before they seized power. Of course, the struggle for power does not begin only at the moment of armed conflict.

I remember when we gave the word to strike, prematurely, when the revolutionary movement made what you could call an error in evaluating the objective conditions, already trying to seize power in April, 1958.

At that time, we still had very few men. If I am not mistaken, the total of our guerrilla forces numbered about 180 combatants. When we decided to open the Second Front, we did it with 50 men; we opened the front around Santiago de Cuba with 35 men; and this left other forces that numbered no more than 130 men, all told, perhaps less; there were fewer than 100 men left in the Sierra Maestra at the time.

Resisting with Limited Resources

Well, if, at that time, we had succeeded in overthrowing the tyranny from the military point of view, our military leaders would not have been able to get the experience they got later. Up to that time, our guerrilla forces had never launched a serious frontal attack from prepared positions against the enemy forces. It had been, indeed, a guerilla war.

However, it was during the last stage of the struggle, right after the failure of that attempt to seize power, when the guerilla forces faced the most complex and crucial military problems. Once, we had to defend some national territory that we could not abandon because we had set up workshops, the Rebel Radio Station, and a whole lot of fighting equipment there which we would lose if the enemy took over.

We had to make a stand there with the limited resources at our disposal.

Among other things, we had to regroup all our forces, excepting those at the Second Front in Oriente (*province*), to resist the enemy offensive and we could count on scarcely 300 men of whom some 60 were so poorly armed we could hardly use them. However, that new situation brought about a serious battle. In defense of that territory, which was getting smaller and smaller, to the point where we could not allow it to get any smaller. We fought some important battles. Once, the enemy surrounded us and we surrounded them, in turn. An enemy battalion surrounded us and other enemy forces surrounded our other forces. But we had our first successes here in that sector, we became stronger and were able to counterattack. But one thing is certain: a complex battle developed and we acquired a lot of experience from it. And the experience, and arms, and men strengthened by that struggle made it possible for us to start more important operations, for example, the invasion of Las Villas.

The Fight Against the Army

It goes without saying that without the men forged by those 71 days of fighting, it would have been difficult to undertake the invasion of Las Villas from Oriente.

The more we analyse the conditions under which we began that operation, the number of men who carried it out, facing an enemy militarily much stronger, the more extraordinary a feat it seems, crossing all Camaguey from Oriente without cover, without anything in our favor, and arriving in Las Villas was a truly great feat.

One often wonders how this was possible. The answer is simply that the men who made the crossing were comrades who already had an extraordinary confidence in themselves, had developed a great composure, a great skill and were men who were fully tested. These are the things that made it possible to undertake that operation, and those operations in the lowlands that at first seemed incredible.

In other words, the continuation of the struggle kept developing a set of human values, and the ability to carry out more and more difficult tasks, and we kept on acquiring more experience.

So that by the war not ending in April but at the end of the year, the Revolution, at the moment of triumph, could count on a large group of comrades tested in battle and quite experienced.

Can anyone deny that all the experience acquired in those months has become of the greatest importance to the Revolution now? If we have a large number of comrades competent in defending the Revolution against imperialist attacks; if the Armed Forces of the Revolution can face up to the enemy planes, to oppose his aggression, then that is due, in great part, to the fact that the prolongation of the struggle developed a group of leaders. Of course, not in what they understood when the war ended; but still they at least were tested men, known men, who in time, after the triumph of the conquest of power were able to develop even more.

And so, we have many comrades who took part in all those military actions who today have been trained in our military academies and who have devoted themselves fervently to study. Of course, all this involved a little work. The guerilla war from which most of our leaders sprang up — although at a given moment it was no longer a guerilla war, but a war of major proportions, of

maneuvers, and of positions — made those who came out of it feel a certain scorn for military academies, a certain disdain for military theories and military manuals. That is an attitude we must overcome, though it will be hard at first. But this training has already brought about a change in the thinking of our war companions, a change in their attitude. And in fact today there is not a single revolutionary leader who is not interested in attending the academies.

Well, then, our military schools are training comrades of high rank, and it is not rare to find a major going to a school for sergeants and taking a course for privates, for one of the things we are doing is to see that they learn about the problems of the people whom they are going to lead. And they are doing so with extraordinary enthusiasm.

But the continuation of the struggle resulted in all those men ending up the war with much, and enough experience of a military nature, experience that was to develop still further in the months ahead.

This is an example from the military field which is exactly the same as other fields, when it comes to organization, when it comes to the solution of administrative and political problems. During the struggle, of course, we didn't have vast areas to administer. In China, for example, they had a lot of problems. Indeed, to resolve, even before they seized power. There were certain problems that we discussed after seizing power, such as the problems relating to art, which the revolutionary movement in China discussed before they seized power.

The Political Struggle Developed Revolutionary Values

It can't be said that there weren't experienced men among us. No one can deny that the political struggle in our country has developed a series of values in the public life of our country, revolutionary values and well-trained men. In the end, however, the Revolution came to power. Under what conditions does a revolution come to power? Does it come with an organized and disciplined movement perfectly prepared for the duties of government? No. Do all of the revolutionary forces organically embodied in that revolutionary movement come to power? No.

There is only one revolutionary movement, not two or three or four revolutionary movements. There is really one revolutionary movement and, in the long run, revolution or counter-revolution. A revolutionary movement can be more or less limited; with a revolution, it is possible to reach the objectives the revolution has set (and it cannot be denied that they may be revolutionary as far as they go) and from that moment, either the revolution ceases to be truly revolutionary or it goes forward. In other words, one movement can be more or less radical, which cannot be the case with two, three or four revolutionary movements. That's absurd. Furthermore, those other movements are really counter-revolutionary. *(Compare the experience of the Russian Revolution, while noting the differences within Lenin's Bolshevik Party, which led the insurrection, particularly as recorded in Leon Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution" Vol. 1, Chapter VIII, IX, X, XI and XII, on the February 1917 Insurrection, Vol.2, Chapters V, VI, and IX on the October Bolshevik's seizure of power— Dowson Archives Ed.)*

The Various Revolutionary Forces

The truth is that a revolution does not come to power with an organization that embodies all of the revolutionary forces. There were different revolutionary organizations, and these different revolutionary organizations represented different revolutionary forces. In the common goal that united all revolutionary and non-revolutionary organizations — because there were forces against Batista's tyranny which you could not call revolutionary — there were politicians who were simply against Batista because he had kept them out of his government; there were politicians of the ruling classes, those very ruling classes that Batista's government represented, who were really angling for a change of power. The politicians ousted from power, for example, on March 10th, that whole political group headed by the celebrated Sr. Carlos Prío Socarras, was a group that in the long run represented the same interests as Batista. They, as agents of imperialism dressed in mufti, and Batista, as an agent of imperialism with a military apparatus, an apparatus of force and oppression.

All those people... What did those people intend to do when they got into the government? Did they intend to do anything different from what they did? Let us imagine for just a second that the group of Prío, Tony Varona and their ilk had come to power. Of course, that was virtually impossible. Here you had Prío, Tony Varona and that whole crowd after maybe ten or twelve years in exile alone and they've entered into an election, in a deal with Batista, content just to serve as senators or mayors or provincial governors. That's the way everything ended up. But let us imagine hypothetically that those people had regained power, were once again ruling our country.

What would they have done? What would they have done that was different from what they did in the years when they were in power? They were definitely going to do exactly the same thing, that is, serve the interests of imperialism and serve the interests of the upper middle classes here, insofar as those interests did not conflict with the interests of imperialism, because the interests of imperialism — that is, the foreign monopolies — had a privileged position here in our country, even at the expense of the native middle classes.

They Were Going to Squeeze You Dry

Those people in power would have simply limited themselves to doing the same as they had done. They would not have passed a single revolutionary law; they would not even have reduced rents, as the Revolution did, let alone instituted an Agrarian Reform or Educational Reform, or reform of any kind. Everybody knows what those people would have done. What would they have done? Don't you know? I am talking to the people. What would they have done, had they attained power? Listen to me, Lionel (*unidentified comrade*), it seems that this subject was not explained to your students at the School of Revolutionary Instruction. Man, everybody knows that!

What they did was to rob; what the government and that whole crowd would simply have done was to rob. That is, they were going to squeeze you dry for their services to the ruling economic interests. They would have maintained a professional army, instruments of repression; they would have maintained all the organs of persecution; they would have maintained the existing social system — that's all. In other words, there was a group representing the dominant economic

interests and imperialists which was against Batista simply because they wanted to be the ones in the government; they did not at all like having Batista and Batista's clique instead of them doing the robbing. Of course, they would be against Batista.

What did they do against Batista? Not a thing, absolutely nothing! They devoted themselves to the purchase of arms, to bringing arms here. Often they were successful in bringing them into the country, although they never had the least success in using them; they never even used them.

Everyone remembers the great supply of arms which they smuggled into the country and which the police seized. At the time when we were beginning to set up a revolutionary movement, to train some young people; at a time when we were expecting to see those bigwigs of public life, men with money and property, do something effective against the Batista dictatorship. They had arms, they had money, they had everything; in fact, all they lacked was the will to fight. They were merely playing at revolution. It is true that they brought arms into the country, were looking for people, instructed them in the use of the arms. There were a number of cliques. They acted exactly as they did in the ward politics. Some of them had one or two machine guns hidden and they were looking for people in the wards to fight Batista. How did they win them over? They taught them how to use a machine gun. But, it was the same old, classical politics carried over into the insurrection. Well, these characters were politicking with machine guns; for, indeed, they were all of them thinking of when Batista would fall, one way or the other, and they would bring back the same old thing.

Playing Politics with Arms

We, for our part, went about recruiting young people, picking from the youthful elements we moved around in those who were more serious, more willing, more involved and had a more sincere revolutionary inclination. And what sometimes happened? Where we had organized a cell, they would come – the genuine articles, *autenticos*, the Prio, the Aureliano crowd, all of them, with a machine gun.

In the first place, we didn't have machine guns; and in the second place, even if we had had them, we would not have been able to teach anyone to use them. You cannot imagine what these people did. For example, they had a room full of arms and when they wanted to win over someone, they would tell him: "How can you join that bunch if they have no arms, haven't got a thing?" And they would take him to the house where there were thirty M-1's, forty machine guns. I remember that some people left us that way.

There were a lot of people, serious and willing to fight who, in despair of fighting Batista, in view of his abuses, crimes and villainies, joined the organization which taught them how to use machine guns. There were a lot of people like that who were ready to fight, and proved it later on. But the greatest majority, the leadership of that whole movement, was a group of people who did nothing but play politics with arms.

This was a stage we passed through. They took some people away from us. We trained them, spoke to them, explained to them what a revolution was, what we proposed to do, but the months passed and as there was no.... they became discouraged and joined any group which offered them

arms. It was a most interesting experience. Some day when we are discussing the insurrection, I'll have a lot to say about the experiences in those days when we were organizing....

Our attitude at first was one of willingness to collaborate with any movement prepared to fight for the downfall of Batista, for this was essential to us. We spent months, too, waiting for all those people

Fooling the People

Don't forget that there were a number of political leaders who had prestige among the people, with wealth; some had wealth, but no prestige; others had prestige, but no wealth. During one stage, we were simply taking stock of what was happening, ready to collaborate with any movement; above all, when you consider that the university had become a focus of rebellion. We thought that we could organize the movement around the university forces.

When We Decided to Start Organizing a Revolutionary Movement

We did not decide to organize a revolutionary movement until we became convinced that the people were really being deceived and that it was all madness, all that madness; people were desperate and were joining just any organization. There were twenty organizations at that "Montreal meeting"; there came a whole series of.... I do not even wish to recall all that, but many of those important bigwigs — the Pardo Lladas and that whole crowd — were terribly divided. We decided then to start organizing a revolutionary movement with ideas that we would eventually carry out. We were convinced that absolutely nothing was going to come out of all that, about which part of the people had conceived certain illusions; and we were convinced, moreover, that the tactics were wrong.

The whole plan of organizing an army and taking barracks and overthrowing Batista in twenty-four hours seemed absurd to us and we fully realized that civilians — because in our country there was no background nor tradition of military instruction — those men called upon to fight in the streets against a professional army with discipline and technical training that had at its disposal tanks, aircraft, fighter planes, weapons of all types and, moreover, organization and experience; experience.... I do not mean military experience, but experience in killing people in the streets and splitting up groups and breaking up demonstrations and all that — we realized that in those circumstances an organization of civilians, armed but without training, could be completely defeated in a putsch-type movement like the one we were planning.

It was not a type of insurrection that is accompanied by a condition indispensable for overthrowing a government, such as a strong and powerful mass movement, that is, a general strike. Neither the objective nor subjective conditions existed for organizing a general strike and it was simply a completely adventurous type of operation. We became convinced that it was all absurd and that was when we conceived the idea of launching another type of struggle, like the one we finally carried out, seizing an army barracks.

I remember that I always had a plan. I do not know whether I managed to convince many

people, but when they told me that they had brought in 50 Garand M-1's in a ship, I said to them: "But there are places where you can get more than 50 M-1's; there are places where there are a thousand rifles, greased and well cared for. You don't have to buy them, you don't have to grease them, you don't have to bring them in, you don't have to do anything; all you have to do is take them." I always really believed that there are far more weapons in a barracks than you can import in tons of oil and grease and so on.

I do not know whether I convinced them of that. In the end, we set about getting the first weapons in order to see how we could get the second weapons and how we could launch the revolutionary struggle with the second weapons.

What we always had in mind was, first, to attempt an uprising in one region and try to keep it going and, if that failed, then to go into the mountains with all those weapons and begin a struggle in the mountains.

It seemed to us that revolutionary conditions had to be created by fighting. We were smart enough to realize that we could wage that type of struggle and, under existing conditions, carry it forward to success. From that point of view, we made only one mistake. Do you know what it was? We believed that to begin that type of struggle, we needed more resources than was actually the case. Reality later taught us the following: that while we thought we needed several hundred armed men, (and we were unable to gather those forces and had to start with fewer than one hundred men) experience later demonstrated that it was possible to begin the struggle with far fewer than one hundred — with ten or twelve men. Had we known that, possibly we would not have planned to take Moncada Barracks. We would have planned to take Bayamo Barracks, close as it was to the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. And with the forces we used to attack Moncada Barracks, we would have been able to take Bayamo Barracks and would have certainly succeeded in taking it. And we wouldn't have had to work as hard as we did to get weapons for 82 men; so much fuss was not needed and the fuss was created in order to get money; no one believes that the fuss was.... The fuss had two objectives: agitation regarding the revolutionary struggle. No, it had three objectives: one, to paralyze the politicking elements that were making a tremendous effort to bring the country into a truce and an electoral solution, that is, a non-revolutionary solution; second, to uplift the revolutionary spirit of the people; and third, to gather the minimum resources necessary for us to carry on the revolutionary movement.

We were correct in opposing the elections of those days as a political sell-out, and in doing everything to encourage the revolutionary mood of the people. But the fact was that to start some action, we needed a great deal less than we had imagined.

Now, why did we follow those tactics? Can anyone imagine that you can win revolutionary power with a handful of men? We never imagined such a thing. Our entire revolutionary strategy was geared to our revolutionary understanding. We knew that you can win power only with the support of the people, by mobilizing the masses. We never thought we could win power with ten, twelve or a hundred men. We intended to lay the groundwork for revolutionary struggle through a guerilla action and to develop the struggle until it becomes a mass struggle, and to win power simply with the backing of the masses, as we eventually did. There is no question that the conquest of revolutionary power was due fundamentally to the support of the masses.

Our People Were Eager For a Revolutionary Change

We simply thought out how to take advantage of existing objective conditions, the objective conditions existing in our country and, above all, the system of exploitation prevailing in our country. The situation of the peasants. It wouldn't have occurred to anyone, at least not to me — although there are counterrevolutionaries who think that way, who try to bring off a revolution the way we did. But it would never have occurred to us to start a revolutionary struggle in a country where there are no owners of vast estates; a revolutionary struggle with guerillas in the countryside where there are no estate owners, where the peasants are owners of the land, where there are cooperatives and people's farms, where there is full employment for the entire population. That would not have occurred to us.

Everyone in our country was aware of conditions in the rural areas. Peasants who were not squatters were tenants. Squatters on public lands were the victims of constant evictions and abuse. Cane workers toiled three of four months during the harvest, and two or three months during "the dead season."

Unemployment in the countryside was high. The rural population had migrated to the city where in turn there was already much unemployment. Those who were not squatters were tenants. A tenant on the coffee plantation had to pay one-third or one-quarter of his crops. The tobacco tenant farmer or sharecropper also had to pay 25 or 30 per cent of his crop. The cane planter had to pay a lower percentage, but still it was high, considering the value of raw cane. He had to pay at least 5 per cent of the value of the raw cane. As for prices, the peasants were victims of all kinds of levies and speculating. Their crops were bought cheap and speculators took advantage of their condition to exploit them miserably. In the countryside, commodities were very dear; the peasants had to sell their produce cheap. That was the situation in the countryside. The coffee planters were in the mountains. Who picked the coffee? Well, tens of thousands of men and women from the cane fields, from the sugar plantations, who had no work during "the dead season," went into the mountains to pick coffee. Coffee was grown in the mountains, because the peasants, evicted by the sugar and cattle barons, had taken refuge in the mountains and planted coffee there. It is not because coffee grows exclusively in the mountains, but because that was the only place where they could go to survive.

When we reached the Sierra Maestra (*south-eastern mountain range*), however, it was evident that we had not organized certain aspects of the struggle we were undertaking. For example, we hadn't even made a geographical survey of the Sierra Maestra. We hadn't even set up a preliminary organization in the Sierra Maestra; in short, we could not have started the struggle under worse conditions. It may be good to point up these things so that they can serve as examples to other exploited peoples. We have to say that we did not know a single peasant in the Sierra Maestra and, furthermore, the only ideas we had of the Sierra Maestra were those we had acquired in geography books, and I am sure that if you were to ask anyone here what they learned in their geography books about the Sierra Maestra, they would not know the name of a single river in the Sierra Maestra. They might know that the sources of the Cauto is there, in the Sierra Maestra, and the Contramaestre and the Yara. And what we knew of the Yara was the song about the Rio Yara — that's all.

In other words, conditions were very difficult, but it's true that where the objective conditions are favorable; the Revolution can develop; that it's only on the basis of objective conditions that you can, at a given historical moment, make a revolution. This was fully demonstrated, because the other circumstances, the subjective ones, did not exist. We began that struggle on the basis of certain premises, correct premises, the premise of an exploitative social system in our country and the conviction that our people wanted a revolutionary change. Though they may not have been very aware of it, nevertheless, that's what they wanted. It showed in their general discontent, in the fact that a rebel band immediately found support among wide sectors of the public, in the rebellious spirit of the people and in the degree of political maturity of our people; in spite of all the confusion sown, in spite of all of the propaganda and of all of the lies of imperialism and reaction.

We started with that assumption. That assumption was correct and since it was correct, the hopes and possibilities we had envisaged were fulfilled. So, this teaches the first lesson: that there can be no revolution, in the first place, unless there are objective circumstances at a given historical moment to facilitate and make the revolution. In other words, a revolution cannot be created out of the minds of men. We can give one very clear and evident example. Let us suppose that Martí had been born not in the middle of the past century, the 19th century, but had been born in the middle of the 18th century. With all his extraordinary intelligence, Martí would not have played the role he actually played in the era when he lived and carried on his revolutionary action, under really objective conditions, to start a struggle, a struggle that could not have been launched one century earlier.

Lenin. Let us suppose that Lenin had been born at the end of the 18th century. Well, he could not have developed the theories he developed as leader of the Russian proletariat, as interpreter of Marxism, since if Marx, in turn, had been born in the 18th century, in the middle of the 18th century, he would possibly have done only what Voltaire, Diderot and all those intellectuals did. One could not have been the intellectual of a class that did not exist; the other, creator of the doctrine of a revolution that could not be realized.

In other words, revolutions do not spring from the minds of men. People can interpret an historical law, a certain moment of historical development. To make a correct interpretation is to propel the revolutionary movement. In Cuba, our role has been that of propellers of that movement, through evaluating a series of objective conditions. Of course, the analysis is not as simple as this, inasmuch as there was another series of circumstances that favored the revolutionary movement we started — certain circumstances which, in the first place, were not taken into account. In the second place, many people thought we were romantics, that we were going to die right there. In the third place, many thought we were (over) ambitious. In the fourth place, many thought that the group of revolutionary leaders was a group of leaders of conservative or non-radical ideas. There is no doubt that had we, when we were getting strength, been known as people with very radical ideas, the social class which is fighting us today would have fought us right then and not only since we took power. *(However, the Moscow-influenced Cuban “Communist” Party – Stalinists in reality – was legally in existence in Cuba before Castro took power. But their policies were known to be reformist (participating in a multi-class anti-Batista “Popular Front” –Dowson Arcives Ed.)*

(See also the journal Voz Proletaria – the Trotskyist newspaper file elsewhere in this website

section – which by March 1961 hailed Cuba as “the first workers’ state in Latin America — a very early recognition of the Revolution having established a socialist economy – Dowson Archives Ed.).

There was a series of circumstances which favored the role of we who initiated, on an objective basis, the guerilla movement in the mountains.

And what did we find in the Sierra Maestra? Well, we met with the first peasants who wanted to join us, peasants who were in a bad way; first, we had met setbacks and were scattered. Some peasants helped to bring the remnants of our forces together. This group of peasants, a very small group, helped us to go deeper into the Sierra Maestra. Some peasants began to join our ranks.

Terror of the Army

But to the majority of peasants what were the hard facts at that time? First of all, there was great fear of the Army. This was the important fact. In the second place, it was difficult for them to realize how such a small group of starving people, ragged, with only a few arms, could destroy all those forces moving about in trucks, trains, airplanes — with so many resources. That is why at first we were, indeed, in a very precarious and difficult position. Indeed, many times we had to move around without the people seeing us. Why? Because in a village or group of 100 persons, there was always a Batista supporter, a grafter, a political sergeant, a something. Well, although he did not see us, he was able to find out where we were from rumors that an armed group had passed through. And he would then go and inform the army.

Nevertheless, we succeeded fairly well in passing through unnoticed until we reached one area, the area of La Plata. And what did we find there? The Army had taken advantage of the existence of our expedition, which it had already assumed to be entirely liquidated, to carry out a series of evictions and terrible abuses.

At the time, there was a certain amount of resistance among the farmers there to a (corporation) — La Viti, (which) owned an estate and the Media Luna sugar mill — I believe it is one of the sugar mills with thousands of acres of land in the area of Niquero. They owned large tracts of land in that area. They even owned Pico Turquino Mountain!

There was a private road going through there. You know that the history of peasants' evictions had always been intimately connected with the problems of roads. A private road is a boundary which the company sets, saying: "To enter, you must go this way; no one can get in." There was one of these roads there and the peasants had been fighting against them. There was a peasants' movement there, very embryonic, it is true. They received us well.

Well, then, in those days we planned our first operation. All right, I wish to establish the following: that the day on which we took the first district, that of La Plata on January 17, we launched a surprise attack at dawn on a mixed patrol of soldiers and marines consisting of twelve men — we were about sixteen. We took them by surprise and overcame them. We took all their arms. Our forces came out of the operation that day with twenty-nine men. Then we turned inland towards the Palma Mocha River to the east, on the coast, facing Pico Turquino.

They Wanted to Evict the Peasants

When we arrived in the morning, a large caravan of peasants were coming down the hillside. These peasants who were about ten kilometers from the scene of action had heard nothing about what had happened. We asked them what had happened to them, but we already knew, for we had captured a harbor pilot who was part of the patrol before we attacked their post and we questioned him thoroughly and found out that a certain Corporal Baso had been around Palma Mocha River telling the peasants to leave the area, that it was going to be bombarded the following day. The patrol was staying at the house of the Viti Company's foreman. They had taken advantage of the presence of our expedition which they had already said was liquidated. No one knew we were there. However, they took advantage of this circumstance to evict the peasants. No airplane had bombed or was going to bomb. It was absurd to think of bombing these hillocks. Nevertheless, this corporal had told all the peasants living along the Palma Mocha River and on the slopes of Pico Turquino that they were going to bomb the next day, so that the peasants would abandon their houses. Then the patrol went around burning all the houses and simply evicting the peasants.

Just imagine, when we were going up along the Palma Mocha River early that morning, we saw a stream of peasants, some with seven children, ten children, four children, coming down and when we met up with them and asked them, "Why are you coming down?" they replied, "Because they are going to bomb." And I told them: "That's a lie. How can you believe that? No one knew yesterday that we were around here, no one knew that we were going to attack that post which we did early in the morning. They have done this to make you all abandon the area. Go on back." And the peasants, just imagine, when they saw us there in the flesh, after having attacked a post, thought it the more (likely) true that the place was going to be bombed. Very few went back. For — just think of it — a marine corporal had been there the day before, saying to them: "Clear out, they are going to bomb here." And the following day, early in the morning, while they are going down, they meet up with a patrol of revolutionaries who had just captured a post and was going to set up camp right there. What doubt could these peasants have had that they were really going to bomb the place? There was no bombing because it was absurd to bomb woods many square kilometers in area with no idea of where the devil a patrol might be. But we saw no bombing. So they had taken advantage of our expedition to force them off the land.

A Heroic Worker

There, when we crossed over into the area of San Lorenzo, what did we find? The peasants there were scared, too. It was reported that some people from Maffo with money, who owned a coffee warehouse, were going to evict them because they had title to all the land around. Wherever we went, we found peasants who were faced with lawsuits. All the peasants were faced with the problem of eviction. Even those who were not being evicted lived in fear of being evicted.

Naturally, we began to do some political work among the peasants, explaining to them the aims of the Revolution. But the problem of the peasants was not only that the landowners wanted to deprive them of their lands and were actually taking their land away, and in a number of cases, had already done so, but that in addition, it took a thousand laborers to cultivate the land on the slopes of these hills. There were places in the mountains that even goats could hardly climb. Still, the peasants had cultivated the slopes with sweet potatoes and coffee.

Here, we thought, was the truly heroic type of worker. And how did he work? He worked in the lowlands for a fortnight, saved up fifteen or twenty pesos, bought a little salt, a little lard, and would go back into the hills. And for years while he went on like this, harvesting a few coffee beans; nobody helped him. But not only that. When this peasant cleared a patch of hill, a couple of rural police would show up and if it wasn't the rural police, it was a man sent by the chief of the nearest post to collect a fee for the clearing.

The unfortunate *guajiro* would come down into the lowlands to work for a fortnight under extreme hardships for a peso because they paid him a peso in the valley to keep a tiny coffee plantation going, and a corporal of the rural police or a sergeant from a distant post had some character in charge of collecting money every time there was a clearing. This made the peasants extremely annoyed.

These peasants had another problem: when they sold their coffee, they were paid thirteen pesos, fourteen pesos for it. They lent them money and charged them high interest. BANFAIC was already in operation, of course, but to whom did the BANFAIC lend money? They lent money to the peasant who already had a crop, to the person who already held cash, who was almost a capitalist, or to the one who with a lot of hard labor had been able to plant half a caballeria and was harvesting 100 quintals. They were willing to finance the man who collected 100 quintals, but those who didn't have a single quintal to harvest, in other words, the vast majority of the campesinos in the Sierra, would get no money because they didn't have title to the land. The BANFAIC demanded title to land. They also demanded that the peasant must already have a crop, that he harvest beans. If he didn't, no loan. This was the situation of the peasants.

Besides, whenever a rural guard came, he was sure to carry off at least a fine rooster, if not a little pig and things of that sort.

Misery and Illiteracy

The merchandise they sold to the peasants was sold at an extremely high price. There was not one school there; not one teacher. If these peasants had realized much sooner what they could have done, it is possible that with only half a dozen rifles they could at least have made themselves independent in the mountains! For the conditions were very favorable. It was a better fate for the peasant to grab a rifle and rise up than to be thrown off his land and endure the hardship and misery he suffered.

These were the conditions, the objective conditions, that we found in the Sierra Maestra. Everything else, organization of the military apparatus, organization of the political apparatus, was still to be done! These things we had already done in the valley. In the valley we formed the suitable organization, but it was very embryonic. It was very new and, therefore, it did not have the discipline of a revolutionary organization tempered by many years of battle.

It is beyond question that in the valley, many young people struggled, made sacrifices, staked their lives, and fought heroically. Of course, it was a heroic type of fight, but it was not able to get the results that we were beginning to get in the mountains.

The arena of the struggle was the mountains. There began our task of organizing a guerilla movement, giving it experience, and at the same time, winning, conquering the masses of peasants for the Revolution. It was perfectly logical that in those objective conditions existing in

the Sierra Maestra, the revolutionary work should develop until it could count on practically unanimous support of the peasants — as it eventually did.

In other words, we were already counting on that social force although we had few weapons and a great many difficulties. The struggle continued to unfold; it developed throughout the land. Guerrilla fighting became nationwide: first, in the Second Front of Las Villas; then, in the Second Front of Oriente. The tactics we were promoting had triumphed. In other words, events had demonstrated that, under certain conditions, that way was correct. We began to give up the putschist type of tactics, (capture or assassination of State and Army HQ leaders, instead of — ed.) organizing forces (of the masses) to try to win the power in a frontal attack at great disadvantage against armed forces. The tactics we favored were wearing down the forces of the tyranny.

Needless to say, that's why we have tremendous faith in guerrilla warfare. We believe in guerrilla fighting under the conditions of our country, which are similar to the conditions in many other Latin-American countries — and don't think that this is the reason...(applause)...you didn't let me finish....We seriously believe we have the right to think so because we have gone through the experience.

The Revolutionary Movement is Invincible

Naturally, we know that when this conviction takes hold of other people equally oppressed by imperialism and the cliques in the pay of imperialism, by the military castes; equally exploited by the landowners, other people going through the same things as the Cuba of hungry peasants, exploited, landless, without schools, without doctors, without credit, without aid of any sort; when they become convinced as we were convinced — and we are convinced, above all, by facts — I am sure that no imperialist force, no reactionary one, no military caste, no NATO army will be able to withstand the revolutionary movement.

We simply believe that given Cuba's circumstances, we must be on guard against one tactical move. Our enemies tried to use the same tactics, but with only one difference: they think they can make a revolution in a country that has done with landlords, that has done with rent; where there is a teacher in every neighborhood, hospitals, doctors, credits, aid; where the day of the middleman is over, speculation is done with, harvests guaranteed. In other words, conditions that are the absolute opposite of the conditions in which we made our Revolution.

All of the Military Science of the Pentagon is Going to Clash with Reality

In other words, we made a revolution under given conditions and along come the counter-revolutionaries to try to fight under conditions that are the very reverse of the conditions we fought under. In short, whatever had to happen to them, happened. In the Sierra Maestra and those areas where they tried to form counter-revolutionary groups, they were always knocked out of action within forty-eight hours.

They copied one part, but did not copy the other. You can't copy the other. They copied the idea of guerrillas, but got them from among the enemy, among the reactionaries. Now, the Pentagon has followed suit, finally, but on the other side of the coin. We do not have to copy anything. We leave things as they are and see what happens. And we know that all the military science of the Pentagon is going to clash with reality; reality being the conditions under which the peoples of Latin America live.

The Spark That Kindles the Fire

There is only one way to combat the revolutionary guerrilla: with the disappearance of imperialism, its monopolies, and its exploitation. That is why we don't worry when we hear that General Taylor or some other general who was in Korea or wherever is setting up an anti-guerrilla school in Panama or Argentina. It's a waste of time.

In short, they are afraid; they're showing that they are really afraid. But they imagine they can escape it, the revolutionary struggle of the peoples. There is no remedy at all for the revolutionary struggle of the peoples except the disappearances of those conditions that drive people to revolt. That is why we can't help laughing at those schools of Taylor. We are sure that any handful of men can launch the struggle wherever the objective conditions that existed in Cuba are present — and I refer to no country in particular — that revolutionary movement, that group, following the rules that guerrillas have to follow, we are absolutely sure that is the spark that would start the fire.

We were like a match in a haystack. I won't say in a cane field because a match in a cane field is serious business. 'A match in a haystack.' That was the guerrilla movement, given the conditions that existed in our country. Little by little, the struggle became a struggle of all the people. Naturally, it spread; it was the people, simply all of the people, who were the sole actors in that struggle and it was the masses who decided the issue.

When our tactics began to pay off, the people immediately started to join. All the revolutionaries began to join and were converted to these tactics and to the struggle of the entire Cuban revolutionary movement. And, in the end, to the struggle of all the people.

How was it possible — though finally by the end of December, the regular forces of tyranny were completely broken — for the revolutionary movement to avoid what's happening in Santo Domingo today, to avoid what reaction and imperialism have always tried to do everywhere in America? Only by the revolutionary consciousness that has been developed in the people, the active participation of the masses.

What was it that made the maneuvers of the American embassy and of reaction disappear like candy in a school yard? Simply the general strike. It was not necessary to fire one more shot. That was the right moment to give the signal for a general strike.

Sure, we launched it at a very premature moment. But what did this mean? That the subjective criteria predominated, that we didn't understand the objective conditions. Our own Revolution can show examples of everything. We had hoped that the conditions were ripe; and that the tyranny would collapse; that is what we wanted, what we hoped for. It so happened that we converted those desires into reality, but only in our imagination.

And what does a revolutionary have to do? He has to interpret reality. We did not interpret that reality and we made a mistake. The result was that the strike didn't come off because conditions were not completely ripe, because of the tactics employed; but mostly because, fundamentally, conditions were not ripe; the military force of the Revolution amounted to less than 200 men.

The Conquest of Revolutionary Power

When the signal was given the second time, we had already isolated whole provinces, destroyed complete enemy units; the enemy had been really split wide open. On other occasions, the enemy had always been able to cross any territory he wanted to and had always dominated the situation in the country. The signal must be given at the right time and then strategy is easy to carry out: the conquest of revolutionary power by the masses. This is what makes the difference between a true revolutionary movement and a coup d'état.

What factor mobilized the masses? The guerrilla war was the factor that mobilized the masses, that made the struggle, the repression acute, intensified the contradictions of the regime; and the people simply seized power; the masses seized power. This was the first basic characteristic.

It's possible to liquidate the force, the military apparatus, the machinery that propped up the regime. In other words, a series of revolutionary laws was passed: first, the seizure of power by the masses; second, the liquidation of the apparatus, of the military machinery that held the regime of privilege together. *(See also: Also the seminal lesson from Lenin in State and Revolution written in 1917 on the eve of the Bolshevik-led insurrection –esp. Chapter III, The experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: Marx's analysis – 1. What made the Communards' (failed) attempt heroic? 2. What is to replace the smashed State Machine? 3. Abolition of Parliamentarism, 5. Abolition of the Parasite State; Chapt. IV, 2. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism; and Trotsky on the Paris Commune: 1970, Pathfinder: on the stages of revolution and the insurrection {Marx & Mandel}; on the need for the armed proletariat p. 46-48, also "The Lessons of the Commune" p.52; pp. 60, 61, Dowson Archives Ed.)*

What do reaction and imperialism try to do? What do they try to preserve in any crisis? The history of Latin America is full of examples. What they try to preserve at all costs is the military apparatus, the military machine of the system. In the final analysis, neither imperialism nor the ruling classes give a hoot who the president is, who is a representative, who is a senator.

Naturally, reaction and imperialism would like to have for president, if possible, a man who is not a complete crook; it is to their interest, if possible, that he be honest, that he spend money to advance the interests of the ruling classes. It is to their interest to have the public administration function with honesty and, in the end, they prefer a government that steals less to one that steals more.

What is imperialism interested in? It is interested, naturally, in a government that looks after the interests of the monopolies. It is all the same to them whether it be Perez Jimenez or Romulo Betancourt. If you want examples, there's one for you.

What more can a Perez Jimenez give them than a Romulo? Perez Jimenez respected the interests of the oil companies in Venezuela. Romulo more than respects these interests; he worships them. He goes to the extreme of even imposing taxes in order to get himself out of the mess he's in and exempting the military and the United States oil companies, the American interests, from these taxes. He has absolute respect for all the landowners, the big bourgeoisie, the interests of home owners, owners of apartment buildings, big businessmen, owners of large estates — these he respects. And what's more, he pays all the debts Perez Jimenez incurred, money that the bourgeois financiers lent him. In fact, he paid it back, penny for penny. He couldn't renounce these debts.

Romulo Serves Imperialism

And so, he is wholehearted in serving the interests of imperialism, of the ruling economic classes, the big bourgeoisie of Venezuela and the military caste. Yes, indeed, he finds it necessary to burn one candle for the Department of State and another candle for the military, although the two candles were really serving the same interests. He is trying to please the military and at the same time, see that the American ambassador (that was the role of Mr. Moscoso) (laughter)...the role of Mr. Moscoso in Venezuela was to visit officials, to tell the high officials of Venezuela: "Don't conspire against Betancourt; Betancourt offers a solution; if you stage a coup d'état, there will be another Cuba."

What does this prove? That it suits the imperialists to dress up their domination of Latin America in a certain civilian garb, the trappings of "representative democracy" which disappear, as they have disappeared in Venezuela, as soon as the contradictions become intensified.

In fact, at this very time, they have just begun the suppression of the Communist Party and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left. They have shut down the newspaper of the Democratic Republican Union; muzzled their newspaper. And who is left there? The COPEY party, the most reactionary party in Venezuela. And with whom are they allied? With the worst elements, those who were left behind with the Betancourt regime when the best people dropped him: the crooks, the gangsters, the Mujalistas, that whole gang working together.

In other words, we have the perfect union of the American embassy, military reaction, a political party which is the most reactionary, representing the interests of the exploiters and the worst elements, crooks and thieves of the Betancourt clique. Yes, it has come to this. There is no more "representative democracy" there; they lack even that!

Well, the same is true of Peru. What more can you expect from an Odria than from a Prado? It's no problem for them.

It is only logical that the national bourgeoisie, the ruling classes, should prefer a type of government — as I said before, that if possible, is respectable and, if possible, runs things in a way that will cause the least trouble. They have been partial, frequently, to military regimes; and why? Because they are governments by repression, by force, against the workers' movement, against the peasant movement.

Down with One and Up with Another

But, at any rate, when a revolutionary movement comes to a head, when a popular movement turns into a revolution, they remove this military group and another military man or a junta of military and civilian groups always emerges. They remove a military man here, put him there, appease the people and, in the end, after a while, the same military man is doing the same things. Or the same thing happens that happened in Venezuela, for one must take into account the special conditions in every country.

In Venezuela a military figure of prestige arose, one, moreover, of the few military figures to act in a democratic, popular way: Wolfgang Larrazabal.

And what happens? There is a great movement of unity, a movement of unity resulting in the overthrow of Perez Jimenez. And what is the first thing that Betancourt did? He divided the nation. He ran for election, destroyed the unity of the people, exactly when the people of Venezuela had a wonderful opportunity to get rid of the military caste.

Imperialism and the Bourgeoisie are Trying to Keep the Military Machine Intact

Well, I want to say simply that the first thing imperialism and the bourgeoisie try to do is to keep the military machine intact. What are they doing in Santo Domingo? In Santo Domingo, they are trying to keep the military machine intact. It's all the same to them whether it's Trujillo or Trujillo's brother or Balaguer or Juan Bosch. It does not matter to them that there is a military machine intact with aircraft, tanks and police skilled in persecution and repression of the people. All the imperialists aim for is to maintain the military machine. All the efforts of the Dominican people are, therefore, to destroy the military machine.

When a moment of crisis arrives, as it arrived in Cuba on the 1st of January or has now arrived in Santo Domingo, the key to this whole situation is whether the people take control of the weapons or whether the military machine remains intact with weapons in hand and the people defenseless. When a crisis of this kind arises in any country, the prime objective of the people's movement is to destroy the military machine and seize its arms. This is an indispensable condition; without it, the revolution can be checked, can be betrayed, and can be crushed.

Imagine what would have happened if the people of Venezuela had been able to take control of the arms when the regime of Perez Jimenez fell. Goodbye imperialism, goodbye oil companies, goodbye Romulo Betancourt or whatever traitor, to call things by their right name!

Of course, we do not invent this; it is all very clearly stated in a book by Lenin — I imagine that all of you or most of you are familiar with it — called "The State and Revolution." It is a point he stressed very much and it is undeniably a vital, perfectly comprehensible truth, even to those who have not been through the experience of Cuba.

This is just what we have seen happen throughout Latin America. The revolution must first destroy the military machine of the old system and take over control of the weapons.

Of course, that is not the only condition for a revolution; but it is an indispensable condition for revolution.

In this way, the Cuban revolutionary process carried through a series of laws, laws that are fundamental to any revolutionary process. First, the conquest of power by the masses, that is, the Conquest of power by the people; and, second, destruction of the military apparatus of the ruling economic class.

In other words, the military machine was in the pay of imperialism, of the landowners, of the financial, of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie.

Those people, those people can now talk about democracy when they had renounced even that bourgeois democracy, a democracy that was for them alone.

Everyone remembers perfectly well what happened in Havana the day after the attack on the Palace. There was the most shameful procession of representatives of those economic classes marching to the Palace. Gentlemen, can you imagine anyone with honor marching to the Palace after that slaughter, after that bloodshed, after those acts perpetrated upon wounded men who fell prisoner, murdered students, people who sacrificed themselves in a heroic deed? Can you imagine that bunch of "boot lickers" lining up at the entrance of the Palace the following day to congratulate Mr. Batista?

And who went there? Well, simply the big bourgeoisie and their lumpen (*de-classed, degenerate elements*), their gangsters, their Mujalistas; the whole gang. Of course, the labor leaders went there right away; or, as they said, the workers. What a farce — the workers! Instruments of reaction and imperialism in the labor movement, the reactionary clergy, big business, that whole crowd; the landowners, the industrialists, the whole crowd in Indian file (*individually and loyally*) to pay their respects. What did they care? I can assure you that none of those gentlemen visited the Presidential Palace after a revolutionary law was passed. None.' And as we know, none of those gentlemen has yet marched to the Presidential Palace where so many revolutionary laws have been made.

On the other hand, they went there to congratulate Batista the day after the massacre. Why? Because, those people, those shameless people who now prate of democracy (perhaps many of them get together in Miami on a Sunday to talk about democracy or if not, to hear a sermon of some priest or other. I say some priest or other, not a revolutionary priest). They now talk about democracy. If someone should ask them, "Good, but what are you fighting for?" "We are fighting for democracy," they say. Actually, they're not even fighting for bourgeois democracy, a regime with a minimum of freedom — but only what the ruling class permits. With this said, let's go on to something else.

When they owned all the newspapers, all the radio and television stations, and even wrote the history books, it was understandable that we should fall for all those tales. But today it is really absurd to try to fool anyone with them. And they are less likely to succeed with the people learning and understanding more every day.

What these people cared about was the government, however bloody, however large the number of youths assassinated, of bodies piled up early in the morning. They didn't care about that. How many died on April 9? They didn't care. How many died in those torture chambers, assassinated? Why is it that wherever you go, you find a marker and a murdered youth — on nearly every highway? And they weren't the only ones. If you were to put a marker everywhere a youth had been murdered, the roads would be full of crosses and markers. In the hills, what they did: in the mountains, the murderers. One still learns of a child, every now and then; what can be done with him? He has such problems. He has to be taken to the doctor because he is the only surviving son of a family of six brothers and they killed the father. So the child has psychological problems. One still finds things like that everywhere.

What did these sufferings of our people matter to the bourgeoisie, that whole ruling class? They were indifferent to them. They went to see Batista, because Batista was obviously the one who protected their class interests. And, as you would expect, they were preparing to take immediate advantage of a change, should a change come about.

I will never forget the first days after the triumph, the visitors I received at home.

It turns out that one — I'm not going to make propaganda now — but I think that I acted quite decently. Anyone who asked for an interview with me I saw right away. I say that this was quite decent. Who showed up at my house? Well, from early in the morning, from the cardinal's nephews to the whole Pepin Rivera family of (*the newspaper*) *Diario de la Marina*; bankers, businessmen, all the factory managers, the whole pack. What a list it was! During the first days I tried to receive those people. I thought it was one of my obligations to receive people who asked for interviews. I didn't have much to do those days because I had no part in the government either. They filled up my house, not only the first day, but the second day, too, and the third day. And I said to myself, "What do those people want?"

Of course, I knew. But what really disgusted me was to see that procession of all those people of former days. (I asked myself) First, what are they thinking? And I said, well, the conceited ones, the more they think they can come here to see us freely, the better; the more of a surprise they'll get. (lengthy applause)

They came to offer their paper, the same paper that had been serving Batista during the tyranny. They came to offer their banks, the same banks that had served Batista to the very last. And then to talk only about the day that the American ambassador, Mr. Bonsal, arrived. Three days before, the entire bourgeois press, radio, and television began to herald the arrival of Mr. Bonsal as a great event. They gave it such publicity that it really began to jar and insult every revolutionary and every man of honor who may not have been revolutionary. Any honorable person holding any position in the country must have felt ashamed of all that publicity surrounding the arrival of a foreign official, as though the great chief executive of the country were arriving — the great governor of the country. They began to surround it all with an atmosphere as though a proconsul, Bonsal, were coming.

The First Interview I Had with Bonsal

I remember the first meeting with Bonsal. It's a shame I don't have the habit of keeping a diary of my impressions and of events. Well, no matter, I received him there in Cojimar — the great Bonsal. The American ambassador! From the first moment he began to talk, he spoke about the Electric Power Company, about the Telephone Company, about the problem of the banks, about the problem of the estates of North American companies, the history of what those companies had done for the country... Good, those were the very first words that gentleman began with. Furthermore, his manner was truly the manner of someone who comes to a country to give instructions. Of course, he didn't have the slightest idea what sort of people he was dealing with. His manner from the outset was something shocking, that of a gentleman (*one of the elite* —Ed.) Practically, those were the mannerisms of that gentleman. Finally, he left.

I don't think there was one single interview in which that gentleman didn't harp on the same old theme. But at that time there wasn't yet the Agrarian Law or nationalization of ... well, I do not quite recall what month it was; I believe Miro Cardona was still Premier.

Well, of course, from the very outset he began to rub us the wrong way, from the very first moment, immediately; simply over the – Ah! The American Military Mission and all that, because one of the first things we found when we got to Havana and at Ciudad Libertad – Ciudad Libertad after the triumph – were the officers of the American Military Mission delighted with their life there, with their uniforms, with their job. They were still there; Batista's army was there; Batista's army leaves, enters the Rebel Army, and they still went to the office every day "to render their services." They were ready to render their services calmly to the people.

I remember when I met those officers. I arrived there and I said to myself: "And these people, what are they doing here? And I went there and called over two or three officers – and I don't remember whether it was in Spanish or English, I don't remember — and I told them to leave. How could they give us classes, seeing that we had defeated the army they had been teaching. How could they give us classes?"

Of course, all that reaction, all that press, was very interested in what the Ambassador would do. They began to deify him, to prepare the ground. All they managed to do, actually, was to make us look forward even less to the arrival of Mister Ambassador. From the very outset, a series of clashes began because of the opinions and points of view, etc., so that those meetings became strained and intolerable until somewhat later, I recall, after he spent three months asking for an interview — It was three months before we gave him an interview. Finally, I had no alternative, according to the elementary rules of protocol, but to give it to him.

Why? Because we just couldn't stand that gentleman's proposals. Good, that's how it was with us. Imagine how those ambassadors must talk in other places where they find a Romulo Betancourt, a Prado, or that type of individual. We certainly know that the American ambassador must talk to them as one talks to a servant.

Well, we were speaking about the reaction of all that bourgeoisie and big bourgeoisie the day after the Revolution seized power. Those were the conditions. Two requirements had already been fulfilled. And let us now delve a little deeper into the subject. We must look at it all, eh? I assure you. Let's go into the subject.

The Revolution had (accomplished) two things: it had already come into power with the masses; secondly, it had liquidated the military apparatus of the ruling social class. It had an army of the people, that is, it now had the people armed.

Bearded ones, who hadn't gone to military school, were, however, the army of the people. In fact, the Rebel Army was the firmest, the most solid part of the Revolution.

How were the existing classes related one with the other? Well, in the hands of the ruling class at this moment were: all the financial resources, all the economic resources, the entire press, all of radio; that is, to say, all the big radio and television stations, the big printing presses, the

publishing houses, all these, were in their hands. Besides this, were the American magazines, all the imperialist literature in our country. They held all these resources in their hands, the economic resources ... they were, to put it simply, still the owners of the country. And in the government ... Of course, we were the ones to put him there; in other words, it was simply due to the Rebel Army and the fighting of the Rebel Army that a president of the republic was proclaimed.

I am not going to say that we are now revolutionary sages, nor that we were sages then. Far from it. But I will tell the truth, how we always thought, at least how I used to think. One can introduce personalities when one speaks of how we thought then, because the revolutionary forces were still fragmented. I was sure that neither Urrutia nor anyone could prevent the achievement of a revolutionary program. We certainly knew what a revolutionary program was. If we didn't plunge in with a whole set of basic measures, it was because we understood that a series of revolutionary reforms and laws, given the conditions in which the struggle against Batista was developing, would simply weaken the camp of those forces opposed to the Batista tyranny.

We had succeeded, fortunately, in welding together against Batista a large number of political and social forces. We had succeeded in welding together, into a broad front (*united front of independent forces –Dowson archives Ed.*) for the struggle, many sectors of the country. Of course, we had to go through certain embarrassing situations. For example, there were the opinions of the Prio-Miro Cardona group, that whole bunch in the Front, who were in Miami, opposed to a broad, complete unity. They all were in favor of excluding the Socialist Party from that unity. We defended the inclusion of the Socialist Party. Carlos Rafael is witness to all the difficulties we were in because we had to prevent a split, we had to keep (the united front) together. They wanted to have a meeting in Miami to discuss who would make up the union of forces against Batista. We knew that if the discussion took place in Miami, those people were going to impose their conditions and, to put it simply, to break the little unity there was.

Then, we argued that the meeting should be held in the Sierra Maestra, that the delegates of the Front should come to the Sierra Maestra to confer with us. (*Note the revolutionarychutzpah! – Ed.*) We knew that in any discussion held in the Sierra Maestra, we would be able to lay down the conditions, but that, on the other hand, in Miami, they would be the ones who would lay down the conditions. We weren't going to accept that, because we weren't at all disposed to go along with the exclusions they proposed, and that would have created a problem at a most inopportune moment.

But in the long run, with a little cooperation from some quarters, you could say we all agreed on the prime objective: the prime objective of overthrowing the Batista tyranny. Of course, we had already had a previous experience with the Front. It was when some delegates went and said they represented "the 26th of July" and formed a front there. We had been in the mountains a long time already, more than a year, struggling under difficult conditions, under many privations and without help from the outside; and we became boiling mad, all of us, when we found that they had made a pact in our name in Miami. What we did was to send that letter there which those elements called a divisionist letter, and things like that. The only thing we could not accept at all was that pact.

Then, of course, we made a proposition that had a very clear intention, and always formed part of our proposals. It was the following: proposals that made all reconciliation with the army impossible. We always tried to create the worst conditions for a putsch. In other words, we wanted to make a putsch impossible. We were always worried lest, since the revolutionary forces were not yet very developed; a military coup would take place through the maneuvers of imperialism and reaction, like that famous coup of which so much has been said, Barquin's coup. Still, let it be said in passing, that – among those officers there were some good ones, honest, who are today with the Revolution. Well, when the historical record comes to be written, let them clear up what properly needs to be cleared up.

The leader of that coup was a man who had been shaped by the ideology, and by the methods, and by the style of the North American Department of State or of the Pentagon. I believe he was part of that junta, that Junta which bred dictators and this, the Inter-American Organization. I believe they threw us out of it, or didn't admit our representative. They do not comply with the laws of the Organization of American States, well, they do not fulfill their international commitments. The question is that we always tried to prevent a military putsch. When the Revolution did not have sufficiently developed forces, the people would have accepted that change and would have been deceived as other peoples at other times have been deceived, because they do not understand that the system itself, and not individuals, must change. We always feared that maneuver. And what did we do? We said that we would never accept a coup, that we reserve the right to clean out, reorganize and rebuild the armed forces of the Republic. Clearly, no military organization is inclined to accept, even remotely, a formula that implies that a civilian movement could come and rebuild it. And our first move then was this: but, I want you to know first that when we sent word (to strike) from the Sierra Maestra, we were just 120 armed men. Of course, to anyone, it must have seemed a colossal and monstrous absurdity that such a small force should give the word. The followers of Prio and all those people then said that what we were doing was contributing to the strengthening of Batista, because we were scaring the military off with our declarations.

We Stood Alone

The military didn't want to know about us then; they changed their minds later on, due to the progress of the war: many of them were taken prisoner and later freed, and they were well treated. The fact is that at that time, first in the campaign that developed around Moncada which was a slaughter of soldiers for all that, and also through our own proposals, because we were interested in seeing that the military did not stage a coup, and we always warned, "If there's a military coup, the war goes on, and on, and on." And we said that from first to last.

The eventuality that worried us was that imperialism might promote a coup before our forces became strong enough to decide events. That was a most correct tactic, and we expounded it in the letter to Miami denouncing the pact, and the pact was broken. We were alone, but it was a time when it was a thousand times better to walk alone than in bad company.

We Reject the Miami Pact

Another thing: Why, at that time when we were just 120 armed men, weren't we interested in a kind of broad unit with all the organizations that were in exile; yet, later on, when there were thousands of us, we certainly were interested in that broad unity? Very simple. Because in any union at a time when there were 120 of us, the conservative and reactionary elements, or representatives of interests, non-revolutionary but against Batista, would have formed a clear majority. In that unity, we would have been a very small force. However, when the struggle was over, all those organizations agreed that the movement should march ahead victoriously and that the tyranny should be overthrown. At that time, they were interested in unity, but we already were the decisive force in that unity.

At a Miami meeting of representatives of those organizations — there were so many, I can hardly remember them; but there were several — there were just one or two revolutionary organizations represented: the Directorate and the 26th of July Movement, and that was all. Then — I'm talking of Miami, don't make such a face, Carlos, (*apparently an aside to someone — FPCC Editor*). Or were you represented at Miami? Well, in that group of ... at a meeting in Miami, they could have tried to set the conditions. What did we decide to do? Well; we were going to prolong the situation, and not have a meeting until the war ended. It was better to sidestep the position those people took, opposed as it was to the point of view we were going to present... and they were interested in excluding the Socialist Party. This was a basic point of theirs. They would never have accepted it. We understood that it was better not to discuss this problem and to end the war.

That unity did mean definitely that the front against Batista would be maintained, and solid. That is a broad front, with everyone against Batista. Now then, money didn't matter to me, arms didn't matter to me. Actually we were capturing weapons by the hundreds; as for money, we were collecting taxes from the sugar mills, and we already had millions of pesos. It simply represented a broad front, but a front in which we were the main force. Under those conditions, we were more interested in maintaining that front than in any other interest we could have had, inasmuch as, if anyone were left out of that front, the interests of the reactionaries and rightists would have prevailed. These are the conditions under which the overthrow of Batista took place.

The Power of the People

Then there was the phase when we broke the pact that had been made without our agreement, with no representation from us, and without our authorization and, furthermore, that did not represent any revolutionary goals. That was when Urrutia was proclaimed a candidate against one of their candidates. It would have been better if the Revolution had not made any commitment, but we were obliged to name a candidate. Of course, this was not important, nor is it important in any revolution. In a revolution in which the military apparatus does not exist, in a revolution that conquers power with the people, destroys the military apparatus and has a revolutionary army, it does not matter if it is Tom, Dick, or Harry, who is nominated. At any rate, we never had the least worry — I say this with all clarity — that the Revolution could be distorted, that the reactionary elements could seize the government, because the force of the masses and the armed force were there, were in revolutionary hands.

What were we worried about? I believe, I do not know what historians will say and that's up to them, but we'll give our opinion — I believe that what happened those first months was correct, considering the interrelation of the existing forces, the social, the political order and the ideological order; it was convenient to have Urrutia and all those people in the Revolutionary Government. Especially, (*given the existing*) interrelation of the ideological forces still existing in the country. We had the sympathy of the masses and we had the Rebel Army.

How was the revolutionary leadership formed? The revolutionary leadership was mostly a one-man leadership: that is to say, at that time numerous decisions were made pretty nearly by one man. Why were they made by one man? Simply because a well developed revolutionary organization did not exist. There were differences between those who had been in the mountains and those who had been in the plains; between the leadership in the mountains and the leadership in the plains. There were differences that lasted all through the war and some persisted.

I Never Wanted to be a Dictator

It is not always the most pleasant thing to speak about those problems. But even so, one is able to talk about them. Why? Because a part of those comrades with whom we differed at the time, a part, some of those comrades, today take a magnificent revolutionary position and have fully identified themselves with the Revolution. Another part of that leadership is today in Miami, in Puerto Rico, in the American Department of State, or here making counterrevolution. There certainly were differences. Besides, something else took place: the military arm of the Revolution had developed in a really extraordinary way, and this extraordinary development also changed its relation within the 26th of July Movement. The preponderant force at that time was represented by the Rebel Army. And when we arrived in the plains we found within the Rebel Army — which was a military organization that was led, as armies are led in war, through decisions of a supreme commander — almost a kind of one-man leadership, due to the way the Revolution developed and ended.

I remember, and I can speak of those things calmly for a good reason, a little unpleasant though it may be to speak in the first person. I'm going to say the following because, if some people are going to speak of it, it is well for interested parties to speak of it, too. I remember that we felt we had to be on guard against dictatorship. We always said that one of the things we had to fight against was dictatorship, because our country suffered from dictatorship and also suffered the consequences of dictators. From the time of the War of Independence a series of dictators cropped up; among other peoples of Latin America a series of dictators cropped up. Fortunately, I really was not born with any bent to be a dictator, although leading an army at war creates the kind of authority, as armies do, that makes for one-man rule. It can create the habit of dictatorship in men, the habit of being overbearing, the habit that takes pleasure in giving orders. I never really got any special pleasure from giving orders. I remember that, even during the war, I did not issue orders in a military way. I knew that they would be carried out, but I always liked to give my reasons for them: that this ought to be done for such and such a reason. It always seemed much better to me that people should accept orders because they are convinced of the reasons for them.

The First Stage of Revolutionary Government

That's why they talked so much about dictatorship at the time, why they had already begun to talk about it. Who talked about dictatorship? Were they who talked about dictatorship really worried about it? They were worried only by the fact that the Rebel Army was getting the upper hand in the Cuban revolutionary process. The talk of dictatorship was not against a non-existent dictator; the argument against 'caudillismo' was against a growing revolutionary force. And one heard certain remarks about 'caudillismo' and such things, but this is what they were really directed against. But the fact is that when the Revolution comes to power, the Revolution, that's the way it was being led.

There is something else. We, the principal leaders of the Revolution, did not even meet to discuss many of the problems. Some of my other comrades were very confident and many of those decisions were taken in the heat of events and were not collective decisions. At that time, on the other hand, the first Revolutionary Government included elements representing those classes. I said that it was proper to go through that stage. First, we probably had prejudices of our own. I do not know whether it is unfair for us to call it prejudice; but, among other things, it was necessary ... we acted, certainly, imbued with the idea that the revolutionary struggle could not be interpreted in terms of personal ambitions, and things of that sort; secondly, the circumstances gave rise to the naming of a president and a council of ministers...

Let us return to the main thread of the theme, which was somewhat lost. The main thread was as follows: there was a group that formed part of the government and largely decided who the ministers of the government would be. They put in the government men who, in some cases, were people with anachronistically conservative or more or less conservative minds; in short, it was a conservative type of government .

Good, I recall that in those early days the responsibility for making revolutionary laws was left in their hands. The policy we adopted was that there was a council of ministers all set up and that it was not a matter of calling the President on the telephone or anything like that. Throughout that whole period, we waited to see what would happen. And what finally happened had to happen. The first weeks went by and they had not passed a single revolutionary law. We had to put up with this because some of those gentlemen had a certain following among the people; and if they had no following because of their merits, they had a following because the entire press and radio and television, which were in the hands of the social class whose ideological and economic interests those gentlemen represented, defended them and had taken it upon themselves to wage a big propaganda campaign for them. The interests those gentlemen represented were diametrically opposed to the interests of those peasants whom we met when we arrived in the Sierra Maestra; diametrically opposed to the Interests of the farm laborers who worked three months during harvest and then went through the endless "dead season" hungry; diametrically opposed to the interests of the great majority of the country.

What Did Miro Cardona & Company Represent?

And it was simply necessary to pass through that stage, to use it to unmask those gentlemen.

Now, under what conditions does the Revolution come to power? Why do all these things happen? Well, all these things happen as a result of the absence of what we stated before: a single revolutionary movement, organically embodying all revolutionary forces. So, it had to happen. We represented part of those forces; but did not have the organization.

How were the revolutionary forces represented? What were the revolutionary forces, in the first place, the revolutionary social forces? The working class, the peasants, the students, and more or less wide strata of the petite bourgeoisie. Those were what could be called revolutionary forces whose interests were opposed to the interests of the big bourgeoisie, in the first place, to the interests of imperialism and of the financial, commercial, and industrial bourgeoisie: small property owners, small businessmen, that whole stratum of the petite bourgeoisie: intellectuals, students, peasants, and the working class. They were the forces, the revolutionary classes.

Now, what did Urrutia represent in all that? What did Miro Cardona represent? What did Felipe Pazos represent? What did Justo Carrillo represent? What did those gentlemen represent? I am not going to ask what Manolo Fernandez represented, because, I believe, he represented trash; he was a "mad anarchist."

Reporter: He aspired to be another Peron, from the Ministry...

Dr. Castro: To tell the truth, I do not know that gentleman. I was told later that he was very famous for his conversations in cafes and that he talked for hours and hours and hours; I do not know him. The truth is, I did not know many of those people; they were there in the government...

Then, what organizations represented these forces? The working class, the most advanced, most developed elements of the working class, of the industrial and agricultural workers? What political organization represented that class? Not the entire class, because within those classes there were sectors with a petit bourgeois mind, especially those with higher incomes. Certainly, no one can deny that the petite bourgeoisie was against Batista.

The P.S.P. Represented the Working Class

The Popular Socialist Party represented the most advanced elements of the working class, both in the city and in the country. It also had some followers in the countryside; among the small farmers we found a few militant followers of the Popular Socialist Party in the Sierra Maestra. But, fundamentally, it represented that class.

The 26th of July Movement represented, in the first place, the peasants; that is, the entire peasant movement which was organized around the Rebel Army. It represented... the 26th of July Movement attracted many people, too, from the working class who did not belong to any party, laborers, groups of workers who belonged to some party of the petite bourgeoisie, any political party, decent people, also joined the 26th of July Movement, professional people, intellectuals, youth, students, and elements of the petite bourgeoisie, the most progressive and the most revolutionary elements of the middle class and of the petite bourgeoisie also joined. It can be said that those were the forces that the 26th of July represented.

Similarly, the Revolutionary Directorate represented more or less the same sectors, but fundamentally the student sector, where Jose Antonio Echeverria, Faure Chomon and their companions came from. The Revolutionary Directorate sprang up from the student groups and in turn also worked to win members from labor sectors, intellectual sectors and peasant sectors.

That is to say, the revolutionary forces of society were represented in three organizations. It is a fact, I believe, that we have all learned to agree in matters of politics and revolutionary theory. Isn't that so?

You, what sector did you belong to, to the intellectuals? (pointing to Soto).

Soto: To the middle class.

Dr. Castro: No, you did not belong to the petite bourgeoisie... Well, you came from the petite bourgeoisie but were a member of the Socialist Party, a vanguard organization... Listen, if you are going to say that to the people, they are not going to understand well the revolutionary instruction you give them in class. You were an intellectual, you were a member of the party of the working class. And that business of being an intellectual is something among us here. Now, no, no.! Lionel, now you are an intellectual. It's true that I recognize you sincerely as an intellectual of the working class, so don't let the jokers here misunderstand you and harm the program of revolutionary instruction.

Those are the forces.

They Defended the Bourgeoisie

Whom did Prio Socarras represent? I still believe that one can say he represented the "lumpen bourgeoisie," to coin a phrase. Of course, like the crowd that followed him, his role was to defend the interests of the Yankee monopolies, to defend the interests of the landowners and of the big bourgeoisie. Without any doubt all those groups... Pazos? Pazos was a bourgeois intellectual; Justico was a bourgeois intellectual; Manolo was so much loose garbage. Ray, for all his ideology, his mind, was a perverse defender of bourgeois ideology. The great debates in the Council of Ministers were simply over the question whether works projects were to be carried out by the Administration or by contractors. That was one of the tremendous arguments we had with that gentleman. Our position was that the projects should be carried out and that it was inconceivable that a worker would work better on a job for a contractor than for the state. It was one of the first points we clashed over in the Council.

Let me say that the President signed the Agrarian Law and signed some other legislation, but the situation was becoming more difficult every day.

The other elements who had really played at revolution, who had been in exile, and were portrayed as great men here on the bourgeois radio and television and in the press, they represented simply the interests of the dominant classes.

Well now, the revolutionary sectors, the revolutionary classes, were represented by three separate organizations. Those three separate organizations, of course, maintained contacts. They helped each other during the revolution, during the revolutionary struggle, but organically they were three completely separate organizations each of which had its own leadership, its own tactics, its own sphere of action. It is well known, in fact, that there was friction between our colleagues in the Directorate and us because of the hassle over arms. *(No mention by Castro of the supporting role played by the small Trotskyist forces, undoubtedly due to the overwhelming influence of the Cuban Stalinists – see 1943-1963: Voz Proletaria in Dowson Archives W19 – Ed.)*

Reporter: All of our comrades (were) in the Directorate and we were closely united in the Revolution.

The Force Lenin Spoke About

Dr. Castro: How absurd those problems really appear today! How different are the power, security and confidence, the force of the revolution of today from those early days when the Revolution had to face the most trying moments, when it had to face the responsibilities of power, to launch a revolutionary program, and when a large part of the government, all of the press, all of the mass media and, above all, a force — a force that I believe was the greatest — the force Lenin had spoken about, that is, the force of custom or of the manner and habits of thinking and looking at things prevalent among a vast segment of the populace.

That is, force of habit, a series of prejudices, instilled, sustained, and spread by the ruling economic classes, by imperialism and by capitalism in our country, constituted, beyond any doubt whatever, one of the most powerful forces that faced the Revolution. And yet, the revolutionary elements of society, the revolutionary social forces, were divided into three organizations, into three separate forces, (taking) three separate paths.

Revolutionary Unity

How much more healthy the situation would have been if, when the Revolution came to power, these forces had been an organic unit as they are today, with a single leadership, with a single program, with one tactical orientation, with one strategic orientation? Now, of course, this is to pose something illusory. Why? Because the conditions that produced this unity are the conditions that were engendered by the revolutionary process itself.

Our force, that of the 26 of July Movement, at that time made up primarily of the elements of the Rebel Army, was a force that comprised many comrades, many of them officers of the Rebel Army, who, in a revolutionary way, from a revolutionary point of view, had been magnificent fighters, valiant in battle. Many of them were of peasant origin and lacked any solid political instruction. From inclination, from feeling, from a spirit of rebelliousness, they had joined the ranks of the Rebel Army, enemies of abuse, enemies of crime, men who, while lacking opportunity and with no political instruction at all, developed into officers. Many of these comrades were easy prey then to the lies and confusion sowed in our ranks.

Of course, there were some comrades – there weren't many, fortunately, who attained some prominence in the Rebel Army, elements who, even before they joined our ranks, knowingly defended the interests of the bourgeoisie and the ideology of the bourgeoisie. They had reactionary ideas. Many of the comrades of the Rebel Army, magnificent comrades, today politically conscious militant comrades of the Rebel Army, having acquired unusual training in the course of these three years, were good comrades, but soldiers who, at the time, still lacked any solid ideological training. That was the situation.

In other words, the very force the Revolution counted on was fundamentally of peasant origin, of working-class origin, including politically, many comrades in the Army who could neither read nor write.

Conditions that made it possible for the revolutionary forces that exist today to take shape were maturing through the revolutionary process. And that organic unity of the revolutionary forces, that is to say, that unity was forged, precisely, and it necessarily had to be forged, through the revolutionary process itself, which is in fact how it was forged.

What is the meaning of the organization of this Party, this organization? What does the unification of all these revolutionary forces mean? What does the unity of these three organizations mean? What, clearly and in all truth, does it mean for the people, and what does it mean for the Revolution? It means that all the revolutionary forces of society, all the revolutionary forces of society, that is, the working class, the peasant class, the students, the revolutionary strata of the petite bourgeoisie, and the intellectuals – that is to say, the only sectors or classes in society, the only classes in society who, by their very nature and because of the place they occupy in the society, are called upon to be revolutionaries, are today all united within a single revolutionary organization.

The Working Class

In other words, then, all the forces which were previously divided among these separate organizations are now fused in a single organization, under a single revolutionary leadership. What does this mean? It means simply a tremendous strengthening of the Revolution.

From the very first moments, these forces, except for some differences and except for some initial friction, advanced, though separately, of course, by common agreement from the beginning of the Revolution. We went through that first stage of the Revolution with more or less discussion, with more or less exchange of views.

That is, a revolution acquires extraordinary strength when the revolutionary strata of the people, the revolutionary classes, represented in their class organizations, become united in a single organization. And the facts have shown this to be so.

Consider, for example, what forces support the Revolution. They are not the big landowners, they are not the owners of sugar mills, nor big bankers, nor businessmen, nor industrialists, nor any of those people, though there may be an individual here or there who does support the

Revolution, for there are always exceptions; there is always the exceptional case of some philanthropist, some honest individual who, besides, becomes enthusiastic over the Revolution and can pass beyond his own class interests.

The working class... Who joined the procession at the funeral of Manuel Ascunce? (*16-year old volunteer in the literacy campaign, lynched in the Escambray by counterrevolutionaries in October 1961 – FPCC Editor.*) Fundamentally, of course, it was the entire population, but who made up the bulk of that demonstration? Simply the workers. Who make up the bulk of the National Revolutionary Militia? The workers. Who gave their lives in the fighting at Playa Giron ("*Bay of Pigs*"), who fell and died fighting the mercenary invaders? It was the force composed of batallions principally from the capital, though units from Matanzas and Cienfuegos also participated, fighting bravely there, too, workers in the overwhelming majority.

In other words, the fundamental strength of the Revolution, the backbone of the Revolution, is made up of the working class.

The Revolution in the Escambray Mountains

Now who, along with the workers, supports the Revolution? Let's not say, rather let us distinguish between agricultural workers — the agricultural workers on the sugar latifundias (fields) who today are members of sugar cane cooperatives — they were a group that before they formed cooperatives, belonged to the working class and should be viewed as such; the peasants, the peasants of the Sierra Maestra, the peasants of the Baracoa area, the peasants of the Escambray, certainly, because the best proof of what we're saying is the following: despite the fact that a group of elements in no way revolutionary developed there, a group of free-loaders, and we are going to distinguish clearly between the role played there by the "Second Front of the Escambray" and the Revolutionary Directorate. But the situation was such that that band of free-loaders practically forced out from the Escambray the more revolutionary elements, for neither Menoyo nor those people started the Second Front. The Second Front was started by comrades of the Directorate, but the group that developed under the leadership of Menoyo and those people ended up by virtually displacing the comrades of the Directorate out of one zone. Among those gentlemen, the more revolutionary elements were practically pushed aside. That was the situation prevailing in Las Villas when Che Guevara arrived there.

Those people, who had formed a clique there, at a certain point began to act on their own, and followed an outrageous line of action. There are some facts, for example, which are worth recalling. Just one of those gentlemen of Menoyo's "Second Front," himself murdered thirty-three persons. During the entire war, even during the most difficult times among our forces throughout the Sierra Maestra, in a war lasting over two years, we found it necessary to impose the death penalty to hardly more than ten persons. And one single individual, one man alone, had executed thirty-three peasants. And the terrible thing is that this was a group that was up there sponging off the people.

In the Escambray a Revolutionary Tradition Was Not Awakened, as in the Sierra Maestra

A revolutionary tradition was not awakened there, as it was in the Sierra Maestra. The whole way in which the nucleus of the so-called "Second Front" was developed had a negative influence on that entire Escambray area. When the war ended, all of the jobs, from the mayoralty of Cienfuegos, Trinidad, and Topes de Collantes, to the director of public works of Hanabánilla and other places were distributed. They later went there to go politicking as much as they could. That contributed to the development in the Escambray region of a counterrevolutionary movement they organized.

However, even though that counterrevolutionary nucleus developed there, when they had 200 or 300 or 400 and even 500 men — not all from the Escambray, because there were a lot of worthless people who went up there to the Escambray. That's not all. The people in the Escambray were a small minority — the forces that hunted down the counterrevolutionaries there had 3,000 men from the Escambray. In other words, the Revolutionary Militia from the Escambray numbered 3,000 when they had hardly 100, which definitely shows that the small farmers benefited from agrarian reform, rescued by the Revolution from taxes, given teachers, doctors, and credits, even when on some occasions, the revolutionary policy came to peasants more slowly than in other places. Despite that, that is despite the fact that they actually carried on counterrevolutionary work there, negative work, the number of people they managed to get from the Escambray was very, very small. And the Revolution had thousands of militiamen and still has thousands of militiamen there.

Since the Escambray was cleaned up, after the revolutionary work was done there, there are innumerable Revolutionary Defense Committees and militiamen in the Escambray. The anti-illiteracy campaign in the Escambray culminates on the 9th; more than 20,000 people have learned how to read and write in the Escambray. The Escambray is today a revolutionary reserve. And it is undeniable that the small peasant, the poor peasant, the small farmer, that numerous sector of the population, is decidedly with the Revolution, in spite of the fact that culturally it had the highest rate of illiteracy in the country, where they lacked the experience that the organized labor movement had, and the degree of political awareness of the labor movement, the proletariat. That sector is with the Revolution.

Now, the students are with the Revolution. What better proof is there that the students are with the Revolution than the 100,000 volunteers who are teaching people how to read and write? In other words, while the students, in Venezuela, in Caracas, for example, are in the streets protesting against repression, struggling against imperialism, fighting the fascist measures of Mr. Romulo Betancourt and while throughout Latin America there is a vigorous student movement struggling against imperialism, in our country 100,000 students have gone into the countryside to teach people how to read and write. An overwhelming majority of the intellectuals are with the Revolution; honest professional men are with the Revolution, and a wide and numerous stratum of the petite bourgeoisie is with the Revolution. That cannot be denied.

That social stratum, the upper bourgeoisie, the counterrevolution is trying to drag them back, while the Revolution is trying and is succeeding in keeping the best elements with the Revolution. As you can see, Lionel, it is not bad to come from the petite bourgeoisie. Those are truths.

The Working Class Is With The Revolution.

I believe that our people can perfectly understand these things because they see them. When it sees a congress of 10,000 labor delegates, when they see huge gatherings, when they see hundreds of thousands of militiamen, they realize that the working class is with the Revolution. When they see 100,000 volunteer teachers, they realize that the students are with the Revolution. When they see peasant meetings, tens of thousands of peasant militiamen, they realize that the peasants are with the Revolution, and they realize that the intellectuals are with the Revolution, the more honest professional men. The facts prove it.

And, this precisely has been the significance of the unity, the efforts of all the revolutionary sectors of society united in a single revolutionary organization.

Because now another question comes up. How many revolutions could three separate organizations have made? That is, those organizations that represented the revolutionary sectors of society, could they have made three separate revolutions? Or did they have to make one revolution?

I believe this is an important point. In discussing the question of the United Party of the Revolution, it is, above all, desirable for the people to understand the historical roots of the revolutionary process and of the unity of the organizations, so that everyone can realize that there are certain positions or certain attitudes that are purely utopian, illusory, idealistic, false.

We recall that during the interrogation (of the prisoners from Playa Giron – FPCC Editor) one fellow spoke up about a third position and a string of idiocies along the same lines.

First, I must say one thing. In the first place, we are gaining a lot of experiences with the Revolution itself. The Revolution itself is revolutionizing us. The Revolution itself is making us more and more revolutionary every day. There was a time when we were not revolutionaries. Yes, there was a time when there was nothing revolutionary about me. Ah, was it because I was reactionary, thieving and corrupt? No, nothing of the sort. There was a time when politically I could be considered a complete illiterate as a result of my class origins.

And, did I know more about revolution twenty years ago than Marinelle, Carlos Rafael, Anibal, Bias? No, sir. Twenty years ago, many of us knew not one word about revolution, among other things, because twenty years ago many of us... I believe that twenty years ago Raul was just learning to read and write; we were just boys.

But even though many of us were not just boys, we came from social classes other than the working class, and I am very much aware of that – very much aware; furthermore, of the influence that class origin must have had on our thinking. But by the same token I am very much aware of this too, very much aware of instilling in myself revolutionary thought, clear, straight, and cleansed of everything that could have remained in me by reasons that have nothing to do with the consciousness and will of men. But many of us, even when we were students at college, were still political illiterates. I was a political illiterate when I finished, even when I received my bachelor's degree.

Should I be ashamed to admit it? No, quite the contrary. I am very proud to know that I was a B.A. and knew nothing about politics or revolution, and yet today I do know something. Because that proves that I have made some progress.

Don't think I am talking about my own case just because it is my own. I believe I am talking about a case I know better than others and which can serve. As we have had here today the pleasant surprise of seeing the students of the National School of Revolutionary Instruction present, I have taken advantage of the opportunity to expound some ideas that might be useful. It must be an example similar to many others.

What is the most revolutionary class? The working class, beyond a shadow of a doubt. Why? Because its social position makes it revolutionary. Which are the reactionary classes, by definition? The wealthy classes. Their social position as the exploiting class make their minds and their thinking reactionary.

But in the Revolution there are many cases of revolutionary comrades coming from strata other than the working classes. What has happened in some countries with the presence of numerous people from the middle class in the labor movement? Well, they have instilled the thinking of the petite bourgeoisie and of the middle class in the labor movement. That has happened and we have to struggle so that it does not happen here. We therefore have a tremendous struggle in revolutionary education. Why? So that the presence of so many of them shall not inculcate the ideas of a vacillating social class that does not understand discipline, that is given to despairing, that has a whole string of vices, which I am not now inventing, but have been known throughout the history of the revolutionary movement from the middle of the past century until today.

Now, does that mean that a good revolutionary cannot come from that stratum? No! A magnificent revolutionary can come from it; in fact, the great theoreticians of revolutionary thought came from those strata. But why did they come from those strata? Because they were the ones who went to school and to the universities.

A weaver in England who had hardly completed the first or second grade, who had not had a chance to study history or sociology or the natural laws or the physical laws, could not have come up with a revolutionary theory however much the exploitation of that man compelled him to embrace any revolutionary idea; and it was logical that his class should embrace it.

The exploited worker did not have access to the university; only the elements from the middle strata of the population had access to the university. Many of the theoreticians and the greatest theoreticians came precisely from those strata, because they had access to universities and developed revolutionary theories. Like the scientists, they discovered laws of nature, they discovered laws of evolution of the development of society, laws of historical development. Others discovered the laws of natural evolution and still others discovered chemical and physical laws. They were talented men and geniuses and simply developed their great talent and genius – and, of course, to have been a discoverer of a physical law of nature, one could have been a great genius, but we cannot say that this showed great human sensitivity.

There can be no doubt that the intellectual, the genius who dedicated himself to write in

defense of the freedom of the working class, was a man who more than anything else, felt the miseries of that class, its sufferings, the exploitation. And the ones who discovered those laws were not simply discoverers of laws, because Marx, Engels, and Lenin did not dedicate themselves to just discovering laws, but dedicated themselves to organizing the working class movement, to organizing the revolutionary movement, and to the task of developing it.

But it is well to know this: we have to place special emphasis on educating the working class, on continuing the political development of the most advanced nuclei of the working class, and raising to a higher level the political education of the working class – on forging the revolutionary consciousness of the peasants, of the middle class strata that are with the Revolution, of the students, of all the revolutionary sectors of the country – and on expanding to the utmost the base of the revolutionary movement.

And I was saying this, I was saying that we all have gone through. What is it that made us revolutionaries? We were made revolutionaries, first, by being revolutionaries because the most likely thing is that when an individual comes from a social class that is not revolutionary, he will not be a revolutionary. Second — if I might use a word here, an inborn honesty — that is, there are individuals who, when they believe in a thing, believe in it. When they believe in something else, they believe in that honestly, and when they believe they have come upon a truth, they attach themselves to it.

I have not come here to present an autobiography, far from it; nor an analysis of how I came to be revolutionary. If I ever have the time, and right now I don't see where I will find the time, I may write about it. But I can say this. Whenever I discovered something, I always held firmly to it, as many other people do.

My first contacts at the University – even with bourgeois political economy – for I remember that I began to see contradictions and began to have a few revolutionary ideas while taking a course on bourgeois political economy.

Later on, naturally, at the University, we began making our first contacts with the *Communist Manifesto*, with the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and all that. This marked (the beginning of) a process. I can certainly say, admitting it honestly, many of the things which we have done in the Revolution are not things we invented — far from it.

When we left the University, especially in my own particular case, I had already been greatly influenced — I wouldn't say that I was a Marxist-Leninist, far from it. It is possible that I had two million petit bourgeois prejudices and a string of ideas that I'm glad not to have anymore, but fundamentally — if I did not have all those prejudices, I would not have been in the position to make a contribution to the Revolution, as I did.

Anyway, let's put things as they are.

I meant to say that had I been in the position of Carlos Rafael (Rodriguez), we would have faced a much more difficult situation when we went up into the mountains. Definitely, certain circumstances were really quite favorable. Our revolutionary thinking was already strongly

influenced precisely by contact, and that is how it arose. I remember that when we were reading the history of Latin American independence, even in the classical history books, of course, books written by bourgeois authors explain that the influence of the Declaration of the Rights of Man of the French Revolution was a factor that greatly influenced the thought of Latin American liberators. Ideas naturally always spread and win adherents.

One thing is indisputable — I'll come back to this point later on — these ideas already formed much of our revolutionary thinking, although we could hardly say that we were polished revolutionaries. We still cannot honestly claim to be polished revolutionaries. Why not? Because we ourselves realize full well that our love for the accomplishments of the Revolution, our passion for the Revolution, is something that we felt growing from day to day, our attitude in the face of all the problems; at most, today we believe that we are thorough-going revolutionaries and five years from now we may find out that we were really still ignoramuses.

We All Have Much To Learn

I believe that we all have a great deal of studying to do. Am I a convinced revolutionary? Yes, I am a convinced revolutionary, that is so. To some of those who have at times asked me, some people have asked me if I used to think at the time of Moncada as I do today, I say, "I thought very much like I do today." That is the truth. Anyone who reads what we said on that occasion will see that many fundamental things about the Revolution are expressed in that document, and that it is, moreover, a carefully written document. It was written with sufficient care to expound some basic points without at the same time raising problems that could limit our scope of action within the Revolution, so as to prevent the movement which we believed could lead to the overthrow of Batista from being very much reduced and limited. In other words, it was necessary to try to broaden that movement as much as possible.

If we had not written that document carefully, if it had been a more radical program — although it is true that many people were somewhat skeptical about programs and often paid them scant attention — of course, the revolutionary movement of struggle against Batista would certainly not have gained the scope it did and which made victory possible. Anyone who reads the manifesto, the speech on that occasion, will realize what the basic ideas were. (*See Dowson archives W19, 1963b – The Road to Revolution – the 10th Anniversary of Moncada – ed.*)

There are some things, like certain suggestions we made on that occasion, such as increasing the cane workers' share of the sugar, which were brought up to me later on at meetings with the cane workers. They would say to me: "Good, but didn't you mention an increase?" And I told them: "Yes, but at that time we could not say what we can say today and that is that we have made those cane workers owners of the land which is much more than having granted them an increase in the share of sugar."

Certain suggestions were made at that time simply through care not to damage the scope of the revolutionary movement. I remember that on that occasion among the books the police caught us with was a text of Lenin. And then one of the lawyers asked at the Moncada trial: "And that book? Whose is it?" "That book was ours." And, of course, as I was somewhat irritated, I added: "Yes, that book was ours and anybody who does not read those books is an ignoramus." And that

shut him up!

By that time, our revolutionary thinking had, in general, already taken shape. We were not, however, complete revolutionaries – we were far more revolutionary when we attained power. We are convinced revolutionaries. I say so with all due sincerity, because I believe that these appearances should not become a matter of theoretical explanation of things and... There is something that can help more to shape the political thinking of the people, and that is to speak this way, with complete frankness and clarity and honesty.

I consider myself more revolutionary today than I was even on the first of January. Was I a revolutionary on the first of January? Yes, I believe I was a revolutionary on the first of January. That is, all of the ideas I have today I had on the first of January.

Now then, am I at this moment a man who has studied thoroughly all of the political philosophy of the Revolution, the entire history? No, I have not studied it thoroughly. Of course, I am absolutely convinced and have the intention — an intention we all ought to have — to study. Recently, while looking through some books up there in the capital, I found that when I was a student I had read up to page 370 of *Capital*. That's as far as I got. When I have the time, I plan to continue studying Karl Marx's *Capital*.

I Believe Absolutely In Marxism!

In my student years I had studied the *Communist Manifesto* and selected works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Of course, it is very interesting to reread now the things I read at that time. Well, now, do I believe in Marxism? I believe absolutely in Marxism! Did I believe on the first of January? I believed on the first of January. Did I believe on the 26th of July? I believed on the 26th of July! Did I understand it as I do today, after almost ten years of struggle? No, I did not understand it as I do today. Comparing what I understood then with what I understand today, there is a great difference. Did I have prejudices? Yes, I had prejudices on the 26th of July, yes. Could I have been called a thoroughgoing revolutionary on the 26th of July? No, I could not have been called a thoroughgoing revolutionary. Could I have been called a thoroughgoing revolutionary on the first of January? No, I could have been called almost a thoroughgoing revolutionary. Could I be called a thoroughgoing revolutionary today? That would mean that I feel satisfied with what I know and, of course, I am not satisfied. Do I have any doubt about Marxism and do I feel that certain interpretations were wrong and have to be revised? No, I do not have the slightest doubt!

What occurs to me is precisely the opposite – the more experience we gain from life, the more we learn what imperialism is — and not by word, but in the flesh and blood of our people — the more we have to face up to that imperialism, the more we learn about imperialist policies throughout the world – in South Vietnam, in the Congo, in Algeria, in Korea, everywhere in the world. The more we dig deeper and uncover the bloody claws of imperialism, the miserable exploitation, the abuse they commit in the world, the crimes they commit against humanity, the more, in the first place, we feel sentimentally Marxist, emotionally Marxist, and the more we see and discover all the truths contained in the doctrine of Marxism. The more we have to face the reality of a revolution and the class struggle, and we see what the class struggle really is, in the

setting of a revolution, the more convinced we become of all of the truths Marx and Engels wrote and the truly ingenious interpretations of scientific socialism Lenin made.

The more we read today, with the experience, the load of experience we have, in those books, the more convinced we become of their inspired vision, of the foresight they had.

But there is something more than what anyone, any revolutionary leader can say to explain why Marxism made its way in history. It is enough to read the history of Marx, the biography of Marx, which is a book I believe everyone should read when the Government Printing Office publishes it, which is the biography of Marx by Mehring (*the classic eloquent exposition of Marx's ideas, first published in 1936 – John Lane, The Bodley Head, London – ed.*).

But who was Marx, his life, his work, his sacrifices? How did he study? And it will be seen that Marx was a man little known in his time, even hated by many intellectuals, by many pseudo-revolutionaries. His work was known only in small circles. In his time, many other socialist writers had far more renown and prestige than Marx and were better known than Marx. A whole series of writers on socialism who wrote that they were socialists, but who were socialists as a Cuban in 1917 might have been, who had conceived of an ideal world, a more just world, without slaves and without exploiters. They were idealistic socialists, Utopian socialists. Then, many of these people devoted themselves to working out a program, writing about a Utopia, expressing a revolutionary sentiment on an idealistic basis, not on a scientific basis. But many of those writers had the opportunity to make themselves known; many of those thinkers, many of those thoughts penetrated broad segments of the proletariat in Europe, in France, in Italy, in Germany, in Belgium, in England. Marx writes his scientific, eminently scientific work, not writing things as he wished them to be, but writing things as he saw them, as they would have to be as a result of the very development of human society. From his study of history, from his study of economics, he drew a series of conclusions. It is a fact that the work of Marx has made a way for itself. Indeed, the work itself, the truths it contained were so superior and so solid and had such a firm basis, compared to anything of all other socialist writers, that the workers he wrote for — because he wrote for the workers and knew that one day, the workers would understand his work. He had a blind faith that the workers would understand his revolutionary work, his thought and, as they interpreted the truth, it would become the predominant thought among workers throughout the world.

Engels Carries on the Work of Marx

And Marx's work by itself — and this is the fullest proof of the scientific value, of the theoretical value, of the real value of a revolutionary doctrine — the fact that it showed the way by itself, for when all the most advanced workers, the most progressive intellectuals, began to search through everything that had been written on socialism, they rejected all other socialist theories as lacking a sound basis, as lacking a scientific character, and adopted the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. After the death of Marx, Engels undertook to steer the thought... One must keep in mind that Engels was a great thinker, too, but that Engels sacrificed his own intellectual work, because Marx was so poor and lived in such misery and hunger and under such terrible conditions that he saw his children die of hunger, that Engels who knew Marx's genius better than anyone else stuck to working as a merchant simply so that Marx could write *Capital*,

on which he had been working for twenty years. It was one of the most noble, most self-denying and most beautiful lives, and one of the most altruistic sacrifices ever made was the sacrifice Engels made for Marx.

This, aside from Marx's own life, his conduct, his spirit as a self-denying and exemplary father, the sacrifices he made, are sufficient in themselves to destroy one of the greatest hoaxes that the bourgeoisie, capitalism and imperialism have spread about Marxism: that it is an enemy of the family, children, women. One has only to read the life of Marx to begin to realize the number of infamous and stupid lies they have written about him. The moment Marx discovered a great truth and that truth in turn began to influence events, all the writers of reaction and exploitation naturally began to write against Marx. Nevertheless, in spite of that, scientific socialism, Marxism, made headway and was to become the revolutionary theory of the labor movement.

To begin with, there was a labor movement and the labor movement was revolutionary, and Marx clearly saw and understood that and, since he had uncovered the truth, the first to become Marxists, the first to adopt his theory were the workers – the labor movement throughout Europe, the most advanced groups, the most intelligent – until it really became the theory of the working class.

The Value of Lenin

But it wasn't enough that the European labor movement had a revolutionary theory; this theory needed interpretation and so there came a period when the influence of non-revolutionary thought, of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois ideology tried to distort Marx's thought. What is Lenin's great merit? Well, simply that he takes Marx's thought, defends it against all mystification, against all forms of revisionism, against all of the revisions and changes they wanted to make in the thinking of Marx. Armed only with theory, he forms a party, struggles within that party against all petite-bourgeois currents, against all non-revolutionary currents, triumphs over these currents in the party and, with a revolutionary theory, seizes power. That is to say, he wins revolutionary power. What is Lenin's great merit? Lenin has the extraordinary merit of having made a thoroughgoing interpretation of Marx's thought, of having carried it into practice and having developed it under new circumstances, as is the case of a revolutionary party in power. That he developed an entire theory, thought of extraordinary depth, there is not the slightest doubt. That is Lenin's great historical merit as theoretician and leader.

The Building of Communism

Marxism is continuing to develop. Now, one has only to read Khrushchev's report to the 22nd Congress, (*Castro makes the obligatory tip of the hat to the Soviet Union, at the congress which also featured the first denunciation of the crimes of Stalin –ed.*) which is a wholly political treatise, one that begins to confront an entirely new task, the building of communism. Marx did not say how to set up a socialist regime or society. Marx did not say how to build a socialist society. Marx interpreted the laws of history, made a correct interpretation, studied the nature of class society, developed a whole revolutionary theory by virtue of which he explained history through the development of means of production. He studied history through the systems of production which in turn develop relationships of production. These little words, I warn you, are

quite hard to understand when one begins to study Marxism — means of production, system of production, relationships of production — but they can be explained perfectly through practical examples. He interprets history, for until then, history was a mass of interpretations.

Some gave a divine interpretation to history. They said: history develops in accordance with supernatural designs, in accord with the designs of God. Others said that men make history and that men who made history were individuals like Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon. There were racial theories of history, claiming that race was the determining factor of history. A series of anti-scientific theories. A series of absurd theories. Then Marx says: no, history is not made by the divinity, not made by races. History is a process of development, determined by the material conditions of production. In other words, man first has to live. I'll explain this in simpler terms.

Man has to live. In order to live, he begins to struggle with nature. First stage of man: man the gatherer — the stage of primitive communism. In the stage of primitive communism, land is common, property is common, means of production are absolutely rudimentary, corresponding to the stage in which man's means of production are most elemental — that is, in techniques for producing goods to satisfy his needs, man is really very poor. I am not going to give you a better lesson than Lionel (*a reference to a scholar companiono — ed.*), but I am going to explain things, not to you — I am going to explain things to the people.

Primitive Communism and Its Mode of Production

In the stage of primitive communism, there are neither exploiters nor exploited; property is held in common; and some social groups still live under primitive communism in some parts of the world. I have to laugh, because at times some comrades want to make such a great leap ahead as to land in primitive communism. Yet, it is fitting that we learn to appreciate this difference in order to distinguish between primitive communism and the communism the Soviet Union is planning for. What is the difference? Simply this, the fundamental, the big and outstanding difference is that the former was a communism of poverty, an elemental life of poverty and scarcity among men which corresponded to their means of production. The means of production, techniques of production, of cultivation, the first accumulations of capital develop. This further develops, as a consequence, the private appropriation of the means of production and of land, (domestic) animals, of farming tools. A new mode of production, new relations of production consequently arise as the means of production develop.

Private owners appear on the scene: private owners of livestock and farming implements, of land, and also as a means of production and also of men themselves.

Slavery

The second social system (in the history) of man was the system of slavery, of slave labor — very simple, very rudimentary — more advanced, much more advanced, of course, than the techniques of labor in the stage of primitive communism. So, the system of slavery spread. This is the system that characterizes that whole epoch of mankind, of the history of Greece, especially of Rome. The whole Roman Empire developed with that social system as a base. Men were then divided into slave-owners, the masters... There were classes that had no political rights, but had

certain civil rights, for example, in Rome, the plebeians, as well as the slaves.

Everyone knows the history of the struggles of those classes to free themselves — the history of the slaves and their uprisings to shake off the yoke of slavery. The slaves managed to rise up, and developed a great movement all over Italy, opposed to Roman power. They placed the power of Rome in jeopardy, founded cities, even organized a nation of slaves. In the long run, their revolution was smashed.

(We have) the movements of the plebeians with the Gracchi, demanding their rights from the Roman patricians who had economic rights and political rights. Eventually, the system of slavery is superseded, replaced by a system which was a little more benign, but nonetheless still cruel and still a system of exploitation, coming into being as the Roman Empire fell apart: the system of feudalism.

Under feudalism individuals were not slaves, but were semi-slaves, dependent on the feudal lords, who owned the land. They worked part of the time on their own land, partly on the lands of their masters, a situation that does not really differ much from that of some peasants today, who work on the land of their landlords and have to turn over half the crop to him, and, in addition, have to supply their own tools and seed.

And that medieval system corresponding to the Middle Ages, was based on the system of serfdom. Men were dependent on a few lords, on the land when those holdings passed to the hands of other lords of the nobility or of the feudal aristocracy, the peasants changed hands with them. Again, this is not much different from what happens in some countries, like Peru, where latifundias are still sold with the Indians on them.

The Bourgeoisie

Now a new class emerges, but who? The manufacturers, the traders, the merchants make their appearance. Where do the traders and merchants set up shop? In the towns, in the villages. As a result, they begin to develop industry, trade. But this trade finds itself bound in shackles. What shackles? I don't see any shackles... What shackles do they find? They find all the shackles of feudalism. What were these shackles? A whole array of taxes, complete insecurity. When merchandise leaves a town, goes from one village to another, from one medieval burg to another, they have to pay a whole series of tolls. You can imagine what happened with goods from the Near East, from those countries to Italy: spices, perfumes, gold, and things like that, that had to reach France and pass through a hundred feudal lords, a hundred practically different states that did have, it is true, some fealty, some weak bonds, in the first stage of feudalism, to the power of a king, of an absolute monarch.

This new social class coming to the fore, that is, the class of traders and merchants, very rudimentary, to be sure, begins to build up the economy, to accumulate wealth, and begins to clash with the existing relations of production. That is, the existing social relations, the superstructure — so they call it technically in Lionel's classes — the economic structure begins to conflict with the social superstructure. The economic structure of the emerging class comes up against all that framework that was a real hindrance to its growth. That social class then begins to

fight for a whole series of rights. It undertakes a long struggle. The new class kept winning such rights in the various countries of Europe. In some cases, the movement culminated in a bloody revolution, in others in less bloody revolution, in still others in a transformation, but the indisputable fact is that the problem was the same in all countries.

That is, this rising social class, the bourgeoisie — and that is where the word "bourgeoisie" stems from — appeared everywhere, in France, in Germany, in England, in Italy. It had no political rights, it represented different interests from the interests of the nobles and the aristocracy that ruled those countries. It began the struggle against the aristocracy, and then two social classes became locked in struggle: the nobility versus the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie came out on top, as it inevitably had to.

How did it triumph? In France, through a bloody and violent struggle. First, national states were set up, developing in a way parallel with the absolute monarchy, an absolute monarchy resting on a feudal basis, as in France. The bourgeoisie had to break with the existing social system, had to destroy all those feudal shackles. It is then that the French Revolution occurred, in the course of which, this social class, having burst through all the bonds of feudalism, developed, and a new social system was established. Under new conditions, that new system began to develop all the forces it was capable of developing — an extraordinary development of technique, of production, a significant step forward from the previous system.

The Proletariat

It triumphed in other countries as well, without overthrowing the monarchy — instead, converting the absolute monarchies into monarchies resting on a bourgeois base. In other words, it was all the same to the bourgeois whether there was a republic or a monarchy. What really mattered was to eliminate the existing feudal obstacles to the development of the new system, of the new social class, of the new productive forces. Then national states were set up, the ideal of that class, a vast market they could sell to.

I have been explaining all this pretty much in my own way, without the elegance of the teachers of the School of Instruction. These were the things that Marx discovered. He discovered that a new social class arises at the same time — the proletariat.

Where does the proletariat arise from? Precisely, from the development of all the means of production. Factories arise. Textile weavers gradually disappear from the scene (the cotton industry) and are now concentrated in the workshops; new techniques of production lead to a steadily increasing concentration of the means of production into few hands. The workers begin to form associations and the new class begins to take form, centered, where? Around the factory. Marx discovers that all these factories would keep on developing, and that the process of concentration of property was going to continue, that the small proprietors or small industrialists were going to be ruined, and that an increasingly powerful working class would develop.

But at the same time that this capitalist system has given rise to the bourgeoisie, it becomes transformed — as happened to feudalism in its time. Feudalism became an obstacle to the development of society in its opposition to the emergent class. So capitalism, in turn, becomes an

obstacle. What, then, are the characteristics of the capitalist mode of production? Waste in production, lack of planning, competition, squandering, failure to utilize all the technical resources mankind has developed to produce the goods that men need.

By that time in history there were already a number of socialist thinkers who were writing that "We must have socialism." But why should there be socialism? "Because I like it and it seems good to me, and all the workers would want it." Others gave different reasons and advanced a series of hypotheses.

Scientific Socialism

What is the historical merit of Marx? Marx writes something, a correct interpretation of what was going to happen, not simply because people wanted it, but because the very laws of historical evolution predetermined it. This is the great merit of Marx, the founder of scientific socialism which gives the working class a theory.

They interpreted the laws, studied the conditions at a given moment. Marx did not claim to be a fortune-teller. Once they asked him what it would be like once communism was established. He said that he had no crystal ball. He interpreted the laws, gave the labor movement a scientific theory. The theory was developed. The first revolutionary workers' movement came to power in the Soviet Union armed with that theory. The theory continued to develop, and the Soviet Union develops a long experience. What experience? The experience of building the world's first socialist state.

One should bear in mind that this experience is of incalculable value for humanity. When they developed, initiated and carried out the building of the first socialist state, they were taking a path entirely new to humanity, just as they are today advancing along another entirely new road – the building of communist society.

This tells us one thing – simply, that Marxism is a living science, a developing science. We have to study everything that Marx taught, but at the same time we have to study everything that Lenin taught, we have to study the entire experience derived from the building of the first communist society.

There is a question: when the Bolshevik party of the Soviet Union started out to build the first socialist state, what was involved was simply giving reality to a political theory, a revolutionary theory. Humanity stands today before the reality that this theory has been put into practice. What are the results of the application of that theory? What is it that no one can argue against today? Only the imperialists still argue against the facts and I don't think they themselves are sure of their ground.

Socialism is no longer something new to mankind. Socialism is a reality for mankind. But this reality is contained in numbers, in the statistics of the Soviet Union, in the figures comparing the difference between the old Russia of 1913 and the Soviet Union of today. The development and growth of production, the radical change in all aspects of the life of the Soviet people, and what they are today, and the foundations for further development which the Soviet Union has available

today. Even during the first five-year plans of the Soviet Union, they were experimenting, just starting to learn something about planning and acquiring experience. Today, they're working at the same program, but from the perspective of 20 years, with a great deal of experience and certainty. No one can doubt that they'll carry out the program they've outlined because the men carrying the job forward have an apprenticeship of forty years in managing the economy, in planning the economy, in building socialist society. And the figures already demonstrate unequivocally the victory of socialism over capitalism and over imperialism.

This means it takes much less merit to be a socialist today, to build a socialist society, than to have been a socialist when there was no socialist state anywhere in the world yet, and the experience of life and reality had not yet taught and had not submitted the implementation of that theory to proof.

The building of socialism follows a well-beaten path by now. This doesn't mean that conditions are exactly the same in all countries, that socialism has to be built in exactly the same way in every country or that we have to copy rigidly the way it was done. Certainly not! Every country has its own peculiarities, and each country has to tailor its program, and its methods, and tactics to its own peculiar features. That is what we have to do.

But there do exist some common experiences of immense value. Just as in medicine, in astronomy, in physics, there are truths already proved by historical fact, and we have the advantage of being able to rely on all this experience and all these acquired techniques as we build a socialist society.

This is, of course, easy enough to say. In practice, however, the job is somewhat difficult.

Sacrifices by the USSR

There is an enormous gap between theory and practice. It is easy to say that the Soviets built a socialist society. Well, they had to build that socialist society, to build their society at the cost of immense and titanic sacrifices. They even made mistakes, they made many mistakes, at first. Lenin himself undertook to expose some of these, basic errors.

Among other things, the workers' movement, the triumphant revolution in the Soviet Union, had to face a long series of interventions. Well, one of Lenin's great merits was to see clearly the moment when it was possible for the revolutionary movement to seize power. Many felt that this movement would not be able to stay in power. He thought it could, if it took advantage of the correlation of international forces brought about by the imperialist war, and made the demand of the people for peace, bread and land its foremost demand. And he thought that while the imperialist powers were still fighting, he would set up Soviet power and consolidate it. In effect, he was banking on the supposition that he had a certain amount of time before the imperialist war came to a close.

The imperialist war ended and all the countries agreed to intervene in the Soviet Union! Consequently, the Soviets were confronted by unbelievable hardships. First, they had to face

foreign intervention. They had to deal with a powerful bourgeoisie. They had to confront the whole aristocracy and the remnants of Tsarism – they even had to face petit bourgeois movements at home. But finally they won their victory, naturally under the most difficult conditions. At last, they had in their hands power over an immense country, divided, thoroughly devastated, and worse yet, a backward country – a country left with such devastation after the civil war that discontent broke out on occasion among the peasants and among the workers of Moscow and Leningrad.

Lenin himself acknowledged that one of the most trying moments for Soviet power was when the peasants and workers themselves gave vent to their discontent stemming from the extremely precarious economic situation and devastation in the Soviet Union. This was the time of the New Economic Policy – a series of measures temporarily installed to save the situation.

For a long time, the Soviet Union had to go through a period of starvation, of privation, of sacrifice. And when, after twenty years of building socialism, the Second World War broke out, the country was invaded and lost twenty million lives. One must remember that among those twenty million lives were the finest youth of the Soviet Union, the most self-sacrificing, the bravest — who lost their lives in the underground or at the front lines. And imperialism again, with its factories intact, its economy intact, threatens with war. Moreover, all the capitalist countries, with their arms, their atomic weapons, faced a war-ravaged Soviet Union which, in addition, had to help rebuild countries that had also suffered under the Nazi boot. To do this, it had to invest its meager resources in the reconstruction of other countries in the socialist camp.

Advantages Over Capitalism

And, surmounting all those conditions, it reached the present stage. Nobody will dare challenge the extraordinary technical, cultural and scientific progress made by the Soviet Union. I feel that it would be an absurdity and folly only of the blind, not to see that in the scientific field, the Soviet Union has completely surpassed all capitalist countries. In the technical and educational sphere, it suffices to say, for example, that three times as many engineers are studying in the Soviet Union than in the United States. In housing, the Soviet Union is at present the world leader. It has the lowest infant mortality rate in the world. And the average life span is increasing at the fastest rate in the Soviet Union. All this holds true now at this stage and in the wake of all these vicissitudes.

In other words, one thing has been definitely proved – the reality of history has fully demonstrated, has confirmed the doctrine of Marxism and Leninism. Socialist construction promotes an incomparably greater progress in society than does capitalism. The United States is growing at an annual rate of 2.3 or 2.5 percent – the Soviet Union, at an annual rate of 10 or 11 percent. So that in twenty years' time the Soviet Union will have surpassed with something to spare, total United States production, and in per capita production, will have surpassed the United States at an even earlier date. *(Fidel could not predict, at this early date, how the dead weight of the Stalinist bureaucracy would drag down progress in the Soviet Union leading to its collapse in 1989 –ed.)*

Can the United States win in that competition? Can they compete with the socialist countries? Not at all! They would have to give up capitalism to do it. They would have to give up private

ownership of the means of production, private control of the circulation of finance capital, private ownership of land, and transportation. They would simply have to set up a socialist system. They would have to tell the American millionaires "there'll be no more throwing money around." They would have to tell all the American millionaires "no more under-utilization of capital, no more unemployment – we'll use all the means of production achieved by technology here, all the factories that have been built, and we'll manage the economy of the country, we'll plan it, and plan its development, and we'll build the plants we don't have." The only way they will be able to compete with the Soviet Union is with a planned economy, with rational investment of the entire national income — there is no other way.

In other words, the only way out for the United States is to cease being imperialist and capitalist and become socialist. This is the truth. To understand this now, at a time when we have the opportunity to read, to study and to appreciate all these facts is of particular merit. The absurd thing about it is that people should be so fenced in by a curtain of lies and prejudices that they are unaware of things that are basic historical truths.

It is fairly easy and quite simple for our people to understand these things today. All the more so, since the capitalist system of production has reached its highest stage, the phase of imperialism, of colonialism, of exploitation of all peoples, creating starvation and misery. Where do colonial wars take place today? In the Portuguese and French colonies. Where do we see discrimination, persecution, hunger, poverty, cultural backwardness, all this? In the colonies, in colonized countries, in countries exploited by imperialism.

Revolution at the Crossroads

Imperialism today is also the cause of starvation, of poverty, of underdevelopment of all the people. Imperialism makes it necessary to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on armaments every year. Who alone is not interested in disarmament? Imperialism. If the manufacture of armaments were to be stopped in the United States, the immediate result would be that instead of four million unemployed, there would be perhaps ten or fifteen million unemployed. They have been trying to resolve their problems through wars and arms races because, on the one hand, they can maintain a certain level of employment that way. On the other hand, they can keep the people in a state of hysteria — more readily manipulated in the direction they want to take them.

Anyone who honestly analyzes the state of affairs in the world will find that it is the imperialists, the capitalists, who subject the world to the worst poverty, the worst backwardness, and they are simply the scourge of mankind. It is enough for our people to study what is happening around the world to become even more an enemy of imperialism, an enemy of capitalism, simply because, of its world policy of exploitation and extortion, its policy of war.

We didn't have to look around the world to find out what was going on, it was enough to see what was happening right here, in a nutshell. I have dwelt at some length on this topic to draw the following conclusions. When the Revolution came to power, there were two roads for it to follow – to stay within the framework of the existing social order or to go forward – to remain within the capitalist system, within the imperialist orbit, within the criminal policy of imperialism in the Western Hemisphere, in Asia, in Africa, within the same policy which

embraces a Franco In Spain, an Adenauer, a Chiang Kai-Shek, which embraces all the military dictatorships, all the French colonialists in Algeria – or to place our country where it rightfully belongs, that is, on the side of the exploited peoples, on the side of the oppressed peoples, on the side of the colonized peoples.

Our nation, seeing things clearly, could never have accepted a place alongside France against the Algerians, at the side of Franco against the Spanish people, at the side of Chiang Kai-Shek against the great Chinese people, at the side of the imperialists against the South Vietnamese who are fighting there for their independence, at the side of Portugal against the Angolans, at the side of Romulo Betancourt against the Communist Party and against the MIR Movement of Venezuela (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, or Movement of the Revolutionary Left, an Independent revolutionary leftist mass movement in Venezuela – *FPCC Editor*), at the side of the Somozas, at the side of any of those regimes. For despite the fact that the propaganda of imperialism pretends there are differences, the great truth is that the policy of imperialism was exactly the same in Spain and in Nicaragua as in Cuba — in Cuba under Prio in Venezuela, the same under Perez Jimenez as under Betancourt – in Peru, the same under Odria as under Prado.

Viewing the march of world history, viewing the great efforts all people are making to free themselves from starvation, poverty, exploitation, colonialism, discrimination, such as the struggle of the peoples of Asia, of Africa, of Latin America are waging, we could never in all conscience be on the side of imperialism. It is possible that some people stuffed with the *Reader's Digest*, Yankee films, *Life* magazine, the UPI and AP news services which have told so many lies, may be led to believe, that the policy of the United States was a correct, noble, and humanitarian policy, as they try to make out.

What thinking person today, what reasonable person today, what person who sees what is going on all over the world today, can honestly be on the side of the imperialist policies?

It was logical that our nation, not just from the point of view of national values and national feelings, but from the point of view of the universal interests of mankind as well, could never be on the side of those policies, but instead on the side of the policy it supports today, defending the rights of all peoples everywhere. It is possible that some people see this more clearly than they see their own economic problems.

There Are No Middle Roads

For anyone who does not see that our country had to choose between two policies – either the policy of capitalism, the policy of imperialism, or the anti-imperialist policy, the policy of socialism, we must point out that there are no middle roads between capitalism and socialism. Those who persist in thinking they can find some third positions have fallen into a really false and really utopian position. This would be equivalent to blindfolding oneself, it would mean becoming an accomplice of imperialism. It is perfectly understandable that anyone who remains indifferent to the struggle of the Algerians is an accomplice of French imperialism. Whoever remains indifferent to Yankee intervention in Santo Domingo is an accomplice of that Yankee intervention in Santo Domingo. Whoever remains aloof from the persecution unleashed by the traitor Romulo Betancourt against the workers and students

of Venezuela, those same workers and students of Venezuela who are defending us, is an accomplice of that oppression. Whoever remains indifferent to Franco in Spain, to German rearmament, to the German warmongers, the Nazi officers who are today rearmed and even demanding thermonuclear weapons – whoever remains indifferent to what is happening in South Vietnam, to what is happening in the Congo, to what is happening in Angola, whoever remains indifferent and seeks to adopt some third position in the face of those facts, is not really adopting a third position, but is adopting a position of virtual complicity with imperialism. (emphasis by the Dowson archives Ed.)

There are some who believe, who presume themselves to be sharp thinkers, when they insist that what the Cuban Revolution should have done was to take money from the Americans and to take money from the Russians as well.

That is to say, there is no lack of people who preach such a repulsive, such a cowardly, such a cheap and vile political line. What they're saying is – sell yourself, sell the country as if it were just any piece of merchandise to the imperialists. Take hand-outs from imperialism while scaring them with the threat of friendship with the Soviet Union – in other words, be a blackmailer. There were those here who peddled the line of blackmail.

Ah, but how to blackmail? How would they carry out that line of blackmail? There was no room for such blackmail. To have done this would have meant to remain in the status quo prevailing in the country, to respect all the interests of imperialism here – all their thousands of acres, all their sugar mills, their electrical monopoly, their telephone company, their control of our foreign and domestic trade, of our banks. On the other hand, any country that decided to free itself from the monopoly grip of North American business, that decided to carry out agrarian reform, that decided to run its own industries, to carry on an independent policy, would have to take an anti-imperialist position.

Treason or Revolution

In other words, either the Revolution was not revolution or there had to be a betrayal. The Revolution had to choose between both these terms – betrayal or revolution.

And we who remember the men who have died for this Revolution, who remember our fallen comrades, as any revolutionary remembers those who fell, from Guiteras, from Martinez Villena — although Martinez Villena actually did not die murdered, but died as a result of the disaster of that fight — of Mella, all those revolutionaries. They who thought not of the revolutionaries of today, they who thought of Marti, Marti who also had a brilliant vision.

What is the merit of Marti, what makes us admire Marti? Was Marti a Marxist-Leninist? No, Marti was not a Marxist-Leninist. Marti said of Marx that since he placed himself on the side of the poor, he had all his sympathies.

Because the Revolution of Cuba was a revolution of national liberation against Spanish colonial power – it was not a revolution that, was a social struggle – it was a struggle for national independence first. And even at that time, at that time Marti said of Marx: "Since he placed

himself on the side of the poor, he deserves my respect."

And what other vision did Marti have? An equally brilliant vision in the year 1895. He had the vision of North American imperialism when North American imperialism had not yet begun to be imperialism. That's what you call having long-range political vision.

North American imperialism began to develop vigorously from the time of the intervention in Cuba, during which it practically seized the wealth of the country, seized Puerto Rico, seized the Philippines and launched the imperialist stage of North American capitalism. Marti foresaw in 1895 the development of the United States as an imperialist power. And he wrote and alerted the people against it; and spoke out against it. See how brilliant a revolutionary Marti really was to grasp the development of imperialism in 1895, when it had not yet begun to manifest itself as a world force.

And then one must think of all those who fell, all who died, all who fought. What did they fight for? So that the Electric Power Company would keep on being a Yankee company? So that the 18,000 caballerias (600,000 acres) of Atlantic Gulf would keep on being 18,000 foreign-owned caballerias? So that our peasants would keep on being landless, in hunger and misery? So that the banks would continue being foreign properties? So that our country would again be drained of hundreds of millions of dollars every year? So that there would continue to be a million illiterates in our country? So that the peasants would remain without schools, without hospitals, without homes, living in shacks and in slums? So that our people, fifty years after it had supposedly won independence, would continue under those conditions?

No Sacrifice in Vain

Of course, I am not talking here to the revolutionaries, and it is possible that it is unnecessary to talk to the revolutionaries about this. It is the insensitive, the indifferent, the confused who have to be spoken to, those who do not understand why this and why that.

Did all those people die so that the big landowners could continue to be the masters of thousands of caballerias of land? No. Anybody understands that this could not be – that the leaders of the Revolution would have been traitors, had they made a Revolution, led so many young men into combat and into war, sacrificed so many lives for that. So little glory would not have been worth the life of a single Cuban! For so little glory it would not have been worthwhile to raise one weapon. To raise a weapon, to fight, to struggle, to suffer what our country suffered, had to be for something much more than all that.

And some people tried to say that men were dying just so that this system of exploitation could go on, so that a thousand families could go on living like princes in our capitals and in our cities, so that this system of exploitation, of starvation, of poverty, of discrimination, of social abuses, could continue. Some tried to say that. They seemed to believe that the Revolution would do nothing to change that. There were some who, at the last minute, even bought up some bonds and did a few little things, with that in mind. How mistaken they were! How mistaken they were who thought that certain achievements our country had made and had aimed at from as far back as the war of 1895 were going to remain unfulfilled and that things would continue in the same old

way.

It is obvious that this honest line, this revolutionary line (*policy – web ed.*), this line which marches in step with history, in harmony with the feelings and interests of underdeveloped and exploited peoples everywhere in accord with national interests and national honor, is not an easy policy to pursue. It necessarily had to be a policy of sacrifices, since, if we wanted to redeem our people from illiteracy and a low cultural level, from unemployment, from hunger and poverty, if we really wanted to develop our economy, to manage our own economy, an independent economy, and along with an independent economy an independent policy that would wipe out unemployment and illiteracy, poverty and backwardness, misery and ignorance, sickness, and the unhappy situation in which most of our people were living, we had no other choice than to pursue a consistently revolutionary line. Had we not done so, we would not have been able to do what we have done. To do it meant that we had to brave imperialism with all its power. That is what we have done.

The Anti-imperialist Struggle

Of course, we, leaders of the Revolution, are revolutionaries . Were we not revolutionists, we would not be here making a revolution. What I mean by this is simply that the revolutionists and the people together with the revolutionists, in other words, the great exploited mass of the people, is ready to make the necessary sacrifices and pay the necessary price for all this.

A "pancista" (person concerned only with his "panza" or pot-belly), one who is indifferent, one who is insensitive, one who is corrupt, would say "It's best not to look for trouble – it's best to leave all those foreign interests alone." They could have said this, and they did.

We had to choose between remaining under the domination, under the exploitation and, furthermore, the insolence of imperialism, to go on putting up with Yankee ambassadors giving the orders here, keeping our country in the state of poverty it was in, or making an anti-imperialist revolution, making a socialist revolution.

There was no alternative. We chose the only honorable road, the only loyal road that we could follow for our country, and in keeping with the tradition of our revolutionary forefathers, in keeping with the tradition of all those who fought for the good of our country. That is the path we have followed – the path of anti-imperialist struggle, the path of the socialist Revolution. Moreover, there was no room for any other position. Any other position would have been a false position, an absurd position. We will never adopt such a position, nor will we ever waver. Never!

Imperialism should know well that, for all time, we will never have anything to do with it. And imperialism must know that however great our difficulties, however hard our struggle to build our country, to build the future of our country, to write a history worthy of our country, imperialism must not harbor the slightest hope so far as we are concerned.

Many who did not understand these things before understand them today. And they will understand them more and more. For all of us, these things become ever clearer, more evident, and more indisputable.

There Is Only One Revolution

This is the path that the Revolution had to follow – the path of anti-imperialism and the path of socialism, that is, the path of nationalization of all the big industries, nationalization of big business, nationalization and social ownership of the basic means of production – a path of planned development of our economy at a pace that our resources permit, and that the aid we are receiving from abroad permits. Another truly favorable thing for our Revolution has been the fact that we have been able to count on the aid and solidarity which have enabled us to carry our Revolution forward without the enormous sacrifices that other peoples have had to make.

The Revolution had to be anti-imperialist and socialist. Good. There could have been only one anti-imperialist and socialist Revolution, because there is but one revolution. And that is the great dialectical truth of mankind – imperialism, and imperialism versus socialism. The result of this – the victory of socialism, the triumph of the epoch of socialism, the overcoming of the stage of capitalism and imperialism, the establishment of the era of socialism, and later on the era of communism.

No one need be scared by that – there won't be any communism — I'm saying this for any anti-communists left out there — there won't be any communism for at least thirty years.

Just so even our enemies will get to understand what Marxism is. In a nutshell, simply, remember that you just cannot skip over an entire historical stage. Perhaps, today, some underdeveloped countries can skip over the stage of building capitalism, that is, they can start developing the economy of a country through planning and along the path of socialism, but they cannot skip over the stage of socialism. The Soviet Union, itself, after forty years, is just beginning to build communism and hopes to have made considerable progress in this area at the end of twenty years. Thus, we are in a stage of the building of socialism.

I Am A Marxist-Leninist

What is the socialism we have to apply here? Utopian socialism? We simply have to apply scientific socialism. That is why I began by saying with complete frankness that we believe in Marxism, that we believe it is the most correct, the most scientific theory, the only truly revolutionary theory. I say that here with complete satisfaction (applause) and with complete confidence: I am a Marxist-Leninist, and I shall be a Marxist-Leninist to the end of my life, (prolonged applause).

And what kind of a Marxist-Leninist am I? Am I a halfway one? We revolutionaries don't know how to be anything halfway. We only know how to be 100 percent something. And to that we shall dedicate our efforts, our energies, our entire selves. Moreover, it is a great satisfaction to have been illiterate at the age of eighteen and to feel revolutionary as I do now at thirty odd years — I think the "odd years" run to thirty-six (laughter and applause). I've learned a thing or two in eighteen years, and still have a lot to learn. And that is what we are telling the people, with complete candor, with complete loyalty, with all clarity, as I have always spoken to the people, always with complete frankness.

Did I have prejudices? I believe it is good to talk about that. Did I have prejudices about the communists? Yes. Was I ever influenced by imperialist and reactionary propaganda against the communists? Yes. What did I think about the communists? Did I think they were thieves? No, never – I always regarded the communists — at the university and elsewhere — as honorable and honest people and all that... But, well, that is no special merit, because almost everyone recognizes these qualities in them. Did I have the idea they were sectarian? Yes. Why did I have such opinions about the communists? Simply, I am absolutely convinced that the ideas I had about the communists — not about Marxism, nor about the Communist Party — like the ideas many people have were the product of the propaganda and prejudices instilled in us since childhood, practically from school age, in the university, in the movies and everywhere else. I should say so. Do I believe they could make mistakes? Yes, I believe they can make mistakes. Marx, Engels and Lenin could make mistakes, and they themselves were the first to admit that they could be wrong, that they could err, because they did not think themselves infallible.

The Merit In Being Communist

My opinion of the members of the Communist Party, the opinion they really deserve? I believe that as they were unknown for a long time and were excluded and attacked and kept on the sidelines and, whenever a committee was formed, they were left out and were left out because they were regarded as "pests" and none of their statements were printed in the newspapers, we must also recognize that it was a great merit, a very great merit to be a communist. Not today. No, today we are going to see to it that it is a merit. Of course, we are going to see that it is a merit!

It had to be a great merit to have been a communist in those days when, as Felix Torres told me, he was taken out of Santa Clara Jail and was forced to walk to Yaguajay. On foot to Yaguajay! And so on, along those lines, they made innumerable sacrifices and (suffered) tribulations. It is a merit to have been a communist when they were persecuted, when all doors were shut to them, all printing presses, all newspapers, all opportunities. This we have to say.

Far more merit, of course, than being one today. Today, conditions are different. I have, therefore, said that we have to strive so that socialists, Marxists, are really Marxists, in the true sense of the word, ready for all contingencies.

But, in short, I meant this – that I had prejudices against the Socialist Party, prejudices stemming fundamentally from the campaigns. I admit it with the honesty one ought to have when admitting such things. I am not going to ask anything at all of the socialists. I say this now that we are perfectly integrated — comrades all, socialists all. On certain occasions, on certain occasions early in the revolutionary process, there was some friction between us, probably due to different conceptions of certain things, but, basically, because we did not discuss matters.

I must also say that there were people here who fell victim to the intrigue of the early days, when, every time something happened, it was said that there were a group of communists stirring up trouble, provoking a riot. I must say that at one time I even believed that it was the communists who had provoked a riot at a certain place, when a group of people with sticks

attacked a citizen there. I was led to believe it, I must admit it here. And later I discovered that it wasn't the communists who had staged the riot, but divisionist elements who had armed that whole mob with sticks to beat up some citizens.

Unity Follows Discussion

In any case, in the first stages, there was a clash between two things, in reality between prejudices and a series of things. There was a "communist" behind everything. The employment of a communist had to be almost a secret. Right off the bat, the UPI, the AP and all the North American newspapermen would be on the spot digging up ten, a dozen, fifteen or so "communists." It was strange, back in those days, they were already starting to call all the comrades communists, and there was a group of comrades who were not members of the Communist Party, but members of the July 26th Movement. Then they were pointing the finger at them, dragging some story of previous communist activities before the public. They started with that campaign, a campaign which even found an echo in some, more or less numerous, in all areas influenced by anti-communist and imperialist propaganda. Fortunately, due to the efforts of everyone, we got through those stages.

I believe that one of the errors of those first days was the lack of any major exchange of views between the different organizations. Each of us was acting more or less on our own account. It was the revolutionary struggle itself which brought us more and more into contact, more and more into common discussion, more and more into an exchange of views, and steadily promoted our unification.

I must tell you about a terrible experience we had. Some day when the history of this stage is written down and something is said of merit of this Revolution, they might well say that we were making a socialist Revolution without socialists, because at that time anti-communist prejudice was so strong that whenever a communist functionary was appointed to a job, no matter how modest, there would be a wave of protest, followed by a squabble and a train of intrigues. Our measures were socialist measures – a people's farm, a cooperative, an industry nationalized, all these are socialist institutions. We had good comrades, honored comrades of the July 26th Revolutionary Movement – but there weren't enough of them for those tasks. Certainly, there aren't enough men now. How were we going to manage with the jobs and tasks piling up on us at the time? Carrying out a socialist revolution without socialists was one of the most difficult jobs. When the process of uniting the revolutionary forces and the revolutionary organizations began, when anti-communism began to be routed and destroyed, we reached the stage in which it was easier for a number of members of the Socialist Party to fulfill various functions without all that intrigue and all that divisiveness.

A Marxist-Leninist Program

Now, what does this union mean? What is the significance of the moment when all revolutionary organizations unite? What it means, among other things, is hundreds, thousands of cadres, thousands of cadres(!) of tested people, of people who had gone through sacrifices, through hard trials, through difficult trials, who had a political education. And this reminds me of the times people came and said: "When are we going to carry out the July 26th program?" And I

said: "What 26th of July program are we going to carry out unless it is a Marxist-Leninist program? Why should we carry out two Marxist-Leninist programs?" This is the reality. Anything else would mean building castles in the skies.

So then, unification meant the participation of thousands of cadres, all indispensable, basic and essential to the building of socialism. It meant the participation of all the cadres of the Revolutionary Directorate. The Revolutionary Directorate didn't have as many experienced cadres as had the Socialist Party. Yet there were people who said: "No, they want to seize this, they want to seize that." One must be completely ignorant of what a revolutionary really is, to think that a revolutionary just wants to grab a position. What we know about all revolutionaries is that they all share in the work now, and that there is so much work that there are not enough people to handle it all. So much work that some comrades, if they are in the army, would rather go to military school, and if they are civil servants, they prefer to go to a School of Revolutionary Instruction, as a vacation. In other words, some revolutionaries find studying easier than the work they have to do.

All of the Members of the Revolutionary Organizations

Today the Revolution can count on all the cadres of all the revolutionary organizations. A very important contribution of the Socialist Party has been the cadres of old members, educated in socialism, educated by the Socialist Party – the contribution of the Directorate is its youthful cadres – the contribution the 26th of July Movement could not consist of politically educated members with long years of experience, but of many young and enthusiastic people, revolutionary by choice, with all of the experience they acquired in the struggle to attain power. In other words, we have all made our contribution in one way or another and have represented the basic forces.

Formation of the ORI

These forces were called upon to unite in a single organization, and we organized the ORI. It was not easy, it was also a lengthy process – but, in the end, we organized the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations.

Sectarian attitudes are gradually disappearing – so are the attitudes of exclusivism. In the same way, people are no longer being excluded because they are socialists, and, consequently, sectarianism and similar attitudes are disappearing. Some attitudes of extremism are also disappearing. Extremism, which is often called "the measles," should, of course, not be confused with revolutionary firmness. Extremism is another manifestation of the petit bourgeois spirit in the revolutionary movement which we must fight against just as we have to fight against sectarianism.

There are many things our people have already had time to learn. They have had time to get rid of some of the prejudices that many people had who depicted socialism as something terrible, something inhuman, something harsh, something enslaving, which is exactly all that imperialism is and which it accuses socialism of being.

Well, we are in a socialist regime. How different is this socialist regime from everything that had been said about socialism! So much so that even those who have had problems, like the reactionary clergy, who have had problems with the Revolution, can't blame the socialists for them, can't say the socialists tried to close the churches, prohibit and persecute religious ideas. On the contrary, aware that religious sentiment is a part of the feelings of some people, revolutionary power must respect the religious sentiment of that part of the people. It does respect it, and gives it every facility. It was those who waged war on the revolutionary regime who said that they would be deprived of parental authority over their children. And the people have learned the truth.

Who were they who took away parental rights? Saboteurs who murdered young men and women, counter-revolutionary criminals who murdered a 16-year-old teacher and deprive his mother forever of parental rights, of affection, of warmth and the hope of having her son at home again. Not only did they murder him; they tortured him. Why did they torture him? Did they torture him, as the Batista secret police used to do, to force a secret from a revolutionary? No, they did not torture him to get any secrets out of him. They tortured him because they were sadists, because of their love of torture, because that boy was there teaching. What secret could he have had? Thus, it was not to squeeze out any secrets. They stabbed him fourteen times. They stabbed him simply to torture him, to fill him with anguish, to make him suffer, to sow terror in the hearts of all mothers. We found out that what robbed people of their parental rights was exploitative capitalism, which dragged peasant girls away from the countryside to put them to work as servants, to force them into a life of prostitution. We found out that it was capitalism that condemned the daughters of workers and the daughters of peasants to that fate. And it turns out to be precisely socialism that wipes out illiteracy, that educates a million Cubans, that makes plans to rehabilitate prostitutes, to teach typing and shorthand to domestics, to wipe out unemployment, to bring teachers to the remotest corner of the country, to fight and die defending the country from the claws of imperialism, to bring hospitals, to bring roads, to organize social activities, to organize children's activities, to organize youth activities, to develop culture and to struggle for the happiness of the people. That is what we have given our people.

Socialism behaves very generously toward its enemies — too generously. The social system which captured over a thousand mercenary traitors — paid by and serving the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon, and who came here escorted by foreign ships — the system that captured 500 counter-revolutionaries — among whom were many murderers who had already committed blatant crimes against the peasants — without even applying the maximum penalty on them, the social system that sees with anguish its calm and generous attitude repaid by the cowardly and vile murder of a 16-year-old youth — that is socialism.

In other words, with all its power, socialism does not abuse it. It is calm. It is conscientious. It struggles to overcome all its defects. It struggles to overcome extremism, sectarianism, abuses, injustices, simply because it is socialism, simply because it is what Marx and Engels conceived of, what Lenin and all the revolutionaries fought for — a better life for man, a happier life for the people, a freer life for the people, that replaces the regime of class oppression, the regime of an exploiting class over the workers, with a workers' democracy. In Marxist terms, this is known as the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (applause).

But though it is called "dictatorship of the proletariat," it does not mean torture, murder, crime. Certainly not! Those are characteristics of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie — which, indeed, means torture, murder, dipping into the public till, injustice and arbitrariness. Proletarian government means, simply, that the working class seizes power to develop a historic cycle, and that it exercises this power over other classes, against which it has to struggle during the entire stage of the building of socialism. What better proof of the hatred of a class displaced from power is there than the murder of a boy in Trinidad? Could hatred and sadism be expressed any clearer? This is, simply, a manifestation of the class struggle, the struggle of the classes thrown out of power to regain their class control. That's why they develop such hatred, a hatred which, as Marti put it, is born "drooling from the entrails of the man." That description fits this case better than any other because only a mouth-frothing hatred born from the entrails of the exploiting classes could engender a crime like the crime they perpetrated against that boy.

This rule by the working class, the dictatorship of the working class, does not mean torture, or social crimes, or arbitrariness because socialism is opposed to all that. None of those things has anything to do with socialism. Socialism struggles against all injustice and rectifies all injustice. It struggles against all arbitrariness and rectifies all arbitrariness. It struggles against crime and will never tolerate crime, never tolerate torture, never tolerate cowardice, never tolerate any baseness. Of course, it's no bed of roses. The enemies of the working class, the enemies of the peasantry, the enemies of the students, the enemies of socialism, the enemies of national independence won't find the struggle a bed of roses either. These enemies will get a reply from the strong hand of the Revolution, the strong hand of the proletariat, the strong hand of the people.

This means they are not going to waltz through here — for the things that were the cause of the law which the Revolution approved — and which it had to approve because of their behavior, for despite all the care the Revolution takes and all the effort it makes not to commit excesses, to use its power with discretion, to be generous and to keep on stressing generosity, it has been rewarded with crimes and acts as cowardly and barbarous as this (murder of a teacher) — have taught the people to be harsh toward the enemy. We are not inhumane, and none of us can ever take pleasure in anything that involves bloodshed, that involves shooting. No, none of us likes that. None of us are cruel, but we are aware, however, we are very much aware that the enemies of the Revolution should be treated with the harshness they deserve. That in this struggle they are not going to find a proletariat that murders, that tortures — but they are going to find a proletariat that is firm, hard, and will give them the punishment they deserve. This law was not made just to be proclaimed but to be carried out.

The Revolution Has Cadres *(it's leadership group)*

The very intensity of the struggle between the interests of the exploited classes and those of the exploiting classes compelled us to take this decision and to adopt these measures, all absolutely necessary. The Revolution has strength enough for this — strength that comes from the union of all revolutionary social forces, from the integration of all those forces, from the union of all the revolutionary cadres, from the formation of a powerful revolutionary armed force. From all the apparatuses of the masses which the Revolution has created — like the unions, youth

organizations, peasant organizations, student organizations, committees for the Defense of the Revolution and women's organizations – from these organizations the Revolution gets its cadres, gets its mass support, gets strength and the power to apply the necessary measures against its enemies. And let us repeat – we take no pleasure in being harsh out of pure fancy, in being harsh for pleasure, but we revolutionaries know how to be harsh when we have to, and we will be as harsh as necessary with the enemies of the Revolution.

I believe that this background explains the reason for the integration of the revolutionary forces and the creation of the ORI, the reason for the socialist course of the Revolution. But they are going to throw the blame for the socialist Revolution on Carlos Rafael. A Marxist would never blame Carlos Rafael for the socialist revolution. Of course, it is logical that the non-marxists, the Utopians, the lunatics – because they are lunatics – should throw the blame, on the Popular Socialist Party, on the socialist leaders. That is simply the result of their lack of political education, of revolutionary instruction. Rather, we have all contributed to this unity. We feel satisfied to have contributed to this unity and we are striving to organize and create a strong, disciplined and firm vanguard political organization of the working class and of the Cuban Revolution.

A Party of Selected Members

How are we trying to do this? Do we do it like the traditional parties, by inviting everyone, opening the doors equally to everyone to join the party? No.

What did the bourgeois parties do when they were in power? They opened the doors wide, invited everyone in and suddenly, any party that came to power immediately had a million followers.

When we were novices and knew nothing about politics, the newspapers we read used to say "As proof of what the Soviet Union is, the Communist Party has no more than five million members out of a population of two hundred million. To capitalism and imperialism this proved that it was a tiny minority. Of course, they wanted to make us look at a revolutionary Marxist party through the same prism they use on a bourgeois party. With a bourgeois party, the more people, the bigger the show. The bourgeois party has no ideology. It defends the class interests of a bunch of politicians, a conglomeration of individuals. The more people it has, well, the more the patronage, the bigger the shows. They are not at all concerned about what their party members think. So they try very carefully to hide the fact that a revolutionary Marxist party is a vanguard party, a party of leadership and a party of selected people, that if the Soviet Union had opened up recruiting centers, well, there would have been tens of millions of members – that a party of leadership directs and works through mass organizations – that mass organizations are the instruments of leadership and revolutionary work and form the basis of revolutionary work. A revolutionary party is a selective party which leads. It leads and works basically through its mass organizations, through labor unions, youth organizations, women's federations, defense committees (*the local block "CDRs" –ed.*) (which, in this case, is an invention of the Cuban Revolution and is also a fantastic mass organization) peasant associations, cooperatives and the farms which are now in the unions. In other words, it leads and guides through all of these mass organizations.

Therefore, the standard that the political organization of the Cuban Revolution will have to follow will be, above all, the standard of selection and quality. It will not be a quantitative organization – it will be a qualitative organization.

It is Better to be Selective

We must say that as this is a product of the union of different revolutionary organizations, it is logical that in this initial stage the standard shouldn't be applied too rigidly, since one of the steps, in the plan to organize this force — the integration of this revolutionary force — is to train revolutionary cadres. That is, in this initial stage of unification, we cannot logically set as strict requirements as they will have to be in the future, because all the comrades and cadres of the separate organizations have to be integrated into one organization and many of them are engaged in study and training.

This organization will be restricted in membership. It will not be small in number – it will be large, but not too large numerically, because we are going to be very demanding in our requirements for membership in the political organization of the Revolution. Furthermore, as we face greater demands, more conditions and more requirements will be laid down for membership in the United Party of the Socialist Revolution. We will establish a strict standard of selection for it is better to be selective before admitting, than to expel after admitting.

Because, moreover, the enthusiasm of the masses, the revolutionary spirit of the masses is so great, we know that a party which takes shape, develops, and grows strong under these conditions has the advantage of being able to recruit the best elements, the most positive elements from among the masses, and make them members of that organization. It is fundamental that precisely the best of the people, the best of the mass organizations should get the honor and at the same time, fulfill the honored role of membership in the United Party of the Socialist Revolution.

And the more this is so, the more every worker, every peasant, every intellectual, every citizen will appreciate it. It is necessary to point out that any citizen can become a member of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution, whether he is a worker or not. In other words, the doors are open to any true revolutionary who identifies with the Revolution and is willing to follow the standards set and to accept fully and with conviction the program of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution.

Good. In the first place, the standard of selection will become stricter and stricter, precisely because we want the best people represented in that apparatus, which is a vanguard organization, the leadership of the Revolution.

Naturally, other comrades will talk here about certain organizational problems. We want to say a few important things – all members of the separate revolutionary organizations will have equal rights and privileges in the United Party of the Socialist Revolution. This means that there will be no special privilege for having been a member of the Socialist Party for twenty years and it means no discrimination for having been a member of the 26th of July Movement or of the

Revolutionary Directorate. Everyone comes in with absolutely equal rights. We especially have to avoid extremes and mistakes. On the one hand, we must prevent those who say "I have thirty years", or "I have twenty years", from resting on their laurels of these twenty years and believing that their revolutionary background is sufficient. On the other hand, being a new member doesn't give one the right to believe that he doesn't have to know everything he should know about the questions of socialism and the questions of revolutionary theory nor to feel that he is not obliged to follow all our standards with discipline.

The Merit of the Future

That is, we must now make an effort to create a fuller and deeper unity on the basis of one thing alone which is what we should all take as a basis. In the early days, there were people who used to say "I was in the Sierra." And they drove people crazy with this "I was in the Sierra." And there were also people who had been nothing in the Sierra. There are also people now who say: "I have been a communist for fifteen years" when there has been nothing communist about them in all their lives. We definitely have to eradicate from the vocabulary and the attitudes of a true revolutionary such things as "I have been a communist for fifteen years."

Neither the "I was a communist" nor the "I threw bombs" nor the "I was in the Sierra" has any reason to show off.

Whatever the merits each of us may have, comrades, there is still a greater merit and that is the merit in what lies ahead. It would have been correct to say to a militiaman "You are a boaster." What rumor, what line did the reaction try to put across? To divide the militiaman from the rebel soldier, to create animosity between them?" Some people even let themselves be carried away by that false sentiment and some let themselves be carried away by the opinion of a militiaman who had done nothing. On that basis, what should we think about the hundred militiamen who fell alongside the soldiers and the revolutionary police! What should we think when we see today the photograph of a young worker who died fighting at Giron Beach, who gave his life, who left his wife a widow, who left his children orphans! Wouldn't everyone really feel ashamed to have thrown up in someone's face that, at one time, he was a militiaman, that he was not in the Sierra? Wasn't Giron Beach a historical battle too, as glorious as any other battle, a battle that will go down in history as the great victory of the revolutionary Cuban people against Yankee imperialism? Who fell and died there? Don't we have to take off our hats today in respect for the heroes who fell there, though they may not have been in the Sierra, though they may not have been communists for fifteen years, though they may not have thrown a single bomb? So, what is the greatest merit?

In the long run, everything that has been done is done and over with. All those who have died and all those who have fallen would have done so in vain, if we don't learn how to carry the work of the Revolution forward. And so the merit is in what is not yet, in what is to come. Who knows what struggles lie ahead of us? Who could have told that sixteen-year-old boy, whose picture we saw recently as an eleven-year-old among children seated at desks, that today he was going to be a great hero of our fatherland, a symbol of the nation, a symbol of the culture of Cuba and

America? Who would have had a right to look scornfully at that sixteen-year-old boy who was

teaching people how to read and write, and not have to bow their heads in respect to his name and his memory?

Who knows what battles we'll have to fight, what struggles lie ahead? Why should we believe that there is merit only in what is behind us? Why don't we believe that there is some merit in what we will have to do together from now on. I wish we had been able to do it together from the very beginning. I wish we could always have done it together, like the Bolsheviks who carried out the revolution in 1917.

There Will Be No Special Privileges

Let us be enthusiastic about the tasks before us. Let us approach them with honor, starting with the honor we have spoken about here today, with what I have said here with all honor and with all candor, because the first thing a revolutionary must be is honorable and frank — in the history we must all write together, in the history the ORI must write, and in the history the United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba must write.

In that history, and that struggle, and in the task before us, we must be enthusiastic. Who belongs in the United Party of the Socialist Revolution? Everybody. Every honorable Cuban, every revolutionary Cuban does. Does anyone have special privileges? No, no one. Is there any favoritism here? No, none. For the first time in our fatherland there exists a revolutionary power in which neither Influence, nor patronage, nor nepotism, nor favoritism count, but in which merit alone is indispensable. And what a beautiful thing it is that today our country has such an opportunity.

What, before anything else, will the United Party of the Socialist Revolution be? It will be a school for revolutionaries. It will be a party where one learns to be revolutionary. That is why such special emphasis has been put on the school. The party, as such, is still not officially established. It has not had its first congress yet — but it will have one. When? There's no rush, but it'll have it. But the important thing is that extraordinary progress at the base has been made in integration and unity, and that in fact a revolutionary vanguard organization exists and that hundreds of schools are functioning, and that more than 10,000 citizens are taking courses of revolutionary instruction — they are training and developing their capacities.

And I tell you sincerely that one thing that makes each of us more and more revolutionary every day is to see a comrade who knows practically nothing of revolution, nothing of economics, nothing of Marxism. There were even anti-communists among them, poor people, who had been instilled with anti-communist ideas, though they owned nothing — no capital, no wealth, no property of any kind. That's the limit. There's an explanation for the anti-communism of the owner of the sugar mill, or of a bank, but it is inconceivable that a man who has absolutely nothing should not be in accord with us when we tell him that we are going to socialize big business and the big banks.

Study is Necessary

And to see comrades devote themselves to the study of economics, but in such a way that, to speak the truth, if we revolutionary leaders don't study, we'll soon have people from the ranks knowing more about economics and political economy, Marxism-Leninism, and a whole lot of revolutionary things than we do. I tell you this seriously, whether you want to take it seriously or not, but we shall see. I believe, I believe that, meanwhile, we the leaders are obliged to study more than any one else.

I have seen how those comrades have changed. Why have they changed? They see themselves as comrades who have discovered something, who have found a truth, an indescribable enthusiasm, not usually found in their first studies. We have something to give the masses. We'll be lacking many material things, but there is something more, there is a whole revolutionary doctrine, scientific, profound, full of interest, which we can give to the masses. We can educate them politically, teach them, give them a revolutionary theory. We have schools, we have a press to teach the people.

There is one thing that no one should doubt, and that is that our people will become more revolutionary by the day, and as they become more revolutionary, they'll become better workers, better students, better administrators, we'll have higher production, better fighting units. The Revolution will be better defended, and the Revolution will have more prestige as the people assimilate revolutionary instruction.

Teaching, Not Indoctrination

It is not a matter of indoctrination — we should drop that term. Why? Because the word "indoctrinate" implies instilling something in someone, filling someone's head with something. It isn't a matter of indoctrinating or instilling the people with something, but teaching them to analyze, teaching them to think. No one could have instilled Marxism-Leninism in me, and the best proof is that they tried to inculcate the very opposite of this in me, and they failed completely. They might have planted a few prejudices in me, some things, but really, no one could have instilled the reactionary, fascist, counter-revolutionary, selfish, exploitative spirit in me. And you must remember that for twelve years I was a pupil in parochial schools. And in those twelve years, they couldn't really instill the counter-revolutionary spirit in me, the conservative spirit, the spirit of the exploiter, but on my own I was reading, analyzing and thinking with honesty.

— I believe that we ought to teach the citizen to think, to analyze — to search among the sources of history where there are so many lessons — to search among the sources of the universal revolutionary movement where there are so many lessons — to search among the sources of the universal workers' movement — to search among the sources of theory and explain them. Do not say that a person can believe something he doesn't understand. You create fantasies that way. You develop mystic, dogmatic, fanatic minds that way.

And when someone doesn't understand something, don't stop discussing with him until he understands — and if he does not understand today, he'll understand tomorrow or the day after, because the truths of historic reality are so clear, so evident, and so obvious that sooner or later, every honest mind understands them. So, it isn't a matter of indoctrination.

No one goes to any revolutionary school to be indoctrinated. No one lets himself be indoctrinated, no one accepts absolutely something he doesn't understand. He goes to be educated, to learn to think, to learn to analyze, to be given the elements of wisdom so that he may understand and discuss the ideas of the bourgeoisie, the lies of the bourgeoisie, the lies of imperialism, the lies of capitalism – so that he can learn to dissect, analyze and understand and with patience get to understand Marxism-Leninism, assured that it will cost nothing to teach the people the truth.

Revolution as a Career

No one should fear he'll be indoctrinated. He who believes that he's going to be indoctrinated will not find anyone interested in giving him a "shock treatment" or a hole in the head or anything of the sort. Besides, there are people who, because of their nature, their temperament, can never be revolutionaries. They couldn't be because, above everything, a revolutionary is also a generous person, a disinterested person, a person ready to sacrifice himself. A revolutionary is not an opportunist or a faker. He is a man who is ready to give up many comforts, and who likes it and wants it that way.

Not everyone is a revolutionary just as not everyone is a musician, or a painter just because he has to have a career. Now, we must teach the worker above all, the peasant, the student, the great masses of tire exploited of yesterday. And we must do this more every month because just as it is certain that there are people who could never be revolutionaries, so are there more and more people who understand the truths of the Revolution. This is what we have to do, and this is the aim of the School of Revolutionary Instruction – to teach our people to analyze, to teach them to think.

And a revolutionary has to be, above all, a man who knows how to analyze situations objectively, not subjectively. Learning to think is learning to seek the right solutions. That is one of the important questions I wanted to bring out.

Furthermore, regarding questions of organization, any day now I imagine Anibal will also be invited to join in this program, so that he can speak of everything relating to the organizational aspect of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution.

Program? It will be a Marxist-Leninist program conforming to the specific objective conditions of our country. That is to say, we shall adapt in our program the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism to our conditions. So, that is not nor is it going to be a secret, not at all. And our people, our working class agrees with that, our peasantry agrees, all honest intellectuals agree, the youth, all honest citizens of our country agree.

So, those were the fundamental questions. Other questions relate to discipline and a whole series of standards, but it seems to me that my duty here today is to talk about the United Party of the Socialist Revolution – and I wish to point out that you were the ones who decided when and how the United Party of the Socialist Revolution should be discussed — the fundamental thing, the "why" of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution, the roots of the process and the

functions of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution.

Fundamental Task of the Party: to Lead and to Organize

It is known how fundamental is its task – to organize and to lead, through mass organizations, through its cells – and, at the same time, to organize the people in accordance with Marxist-Leninist standards of collective responsibility and leadership.

I am now going to say something about collective leadership, which is possibly the only thing left for me to discuss. For a good part of the time revolutionary leadership was a one-man leadership. That is to say, it was not bossist, not whimsical, nothing like that, but for a good part of the time the decisions were decisions that were made in practice by virtue of the confidence bestowed in the Premier of the Revolutionary Government – and as such, the basic decisions were so made.

I said and I say and repeat – I firmly believe this is wrong. I do not have to reproach myself for this though – it was simply the result of the revolutionary process. Well, what did we think about that? We simply thought that was wrong – in fact, for a long time there was concern here about the problems of leaders and "what would happen if we should lose a leader?" and "if the Revolution is deprived of a head?" Why? We just had to get out of that situation as soon as possible – above all, we had to create a revolutionary party leadership.

That instrument is the best guarantee and the only sound guarantee of the continuity of power and of the revolutionary line (*policies*). I sincerely believe that of the many political systems man has devised throughout his history, throughout his wanderings through history, it is simply the system of government based on administration of the state – by a revolutionary and democratic party with collective leadership.

Why? Since individuals play a role, there is no doubt that individuals play a role in revolutions and an important role, but individuals are, after all, just individuals. And there is nothing more fragile than the life of an individual – even the conscience of individuals is fragile. But we have absolute faith in the firmness of our consciences – however, we know that an individual is the most fragile thing there is. He dies from a bullet, an accident, a stroke, a sickness, anything.

The Idiot Kings

Monarchies, which represented the social system of the empires of the feudal era and of the first national states, are characterized by the fact that a country can be ruled by an idiot. A son of a king is an idiot and the country is condemned to having an idiot rule for forty years because unless he dies before, he can live for forty years and even more. And there are many cases in history of nations ruled by idiots.

Representative bourgeois democracy is characterized by politicking, bribery and corruption and it is a system in which only the ruling classes and the wealthy classes have access to power, aside from the accompanying anarchy of that system of government, as demonstrated by recent history, for example, in France, a country where the government changes ten times a year.

Besides the risks arising from the system — a system of one class ruling another — it also often happens that one man alone can deceive the masses, one man can confuse the masses. A big demagogue, a theatrical person, can under certain circumstances rise to a position of leadership in the state, far beyond his capacities and his merits.

The system of one-man government, the consequence of dictatorship, has two important drawbacks. First, if the dictator is bad, the people suffer the consequences. And secondly, there is the lack of continuity and security in the continuity of power and of revolutionary direction and program. Moreover, some individuals are weak and feeble when exposed to all kinds of risks — and this is in absolute contradiction to the sentiments of the revolutionaries, in absolute contradiction to the sentiments of men.

The Ideal System of Government is the Party System

I, therefore, believe that the ideal system, the most perfect ever devised by men to govern a country, a system moreover that does not aspire to be eternal, but transitory, as temporary as are the stages in the history of a country, is the system of government based on a revolutionary party democratically organized through collective leadership. This means the party must exercise the functions of a leader.

Why is it the best system? (It is the best) if democratic rules work, if the rules of collective leadership work. If democratic rules do not work, if the rules of collective leadership do not work, the system can be as bad as any other system. But if the fundamental principles of internal democracy and collective leadership are maintained, it is without any doubt the most perfect method of government and, above all, of government of a country in a stage of revolutionary transition.

What does this mean? In the first place, if that party is not a mass party, but a selective party, it will get the best citizens of the country, because of their character and their merits, to join revolutionary cells. For long years, they undergo a process of apprenticeship, of direct experience, of performance of duty.

Little by little, through merit, such a citizen can take on ever greater responsibilities. That citizen can become a member of the Regional or Central or National Leadership — he can become a leader through merit. This is not the case with the king who leaves the idiot son in power — it is not the case with the lucky military caudillo, the great soldier, because there are men with great talents as fighters and they acquire great fame and great prestige as warriors but are perfectly stupid as rulers.

It is not a question of being a demagogue or faker or a theatrical man. In a party where discipline, principles, selectivity, internal democracy and collective leadership predominate, the fool cannot rise nor can the idiot become chief of state nor can the lucky adventurer. That school will be a school where men will be tested by learning and training.

And so the most important posts in the state will be filled by men who have ability and have risen through merit.

What citizen can get to be a leader of his country in this way, a member of the leadership of his country? Simply, all citizens through merit, all citizens through their own worth. Only those who have true political bent, who have a true spirit of sacrifice, will get ahead.

It is not the other kind of politics where positions depend upon money, upon connections, upon favoritism. Let's rid ourselves of connections, of favoritism – let's rid ourselves of all that, and we shall without a doubt have a system that guarantees that the people will be governed by the most competent, best equipped men. Put simply, collective leadership.

How can the most fundamental decisions of the country, all of the decisions vital to the life of a country be made by one man, by a single official? That is simply absurd. We have seen, as one can see every day, that in some issues he can be wrong.

Suppose the views of some leaders were not checked with those of other leaders, if one leader's evaluation of the facts were not checked with another leader's, were not discussed and that decisions were simply adopted unilaterally and without discussion.

What does this expose the people to? It exposes them to being victimized by all the whims, all the mistakes and all the errors. It is far less likely that solutions which are discussed can be wrong, than solutions that are adopted without guidance and without discussion. I believe that very strongly, I believe in collective leadership, I believe in leadership by a vanguard political party.

And that is simply what we think and that is what every revolutionary has to think. The words of the “Internationale” (*the iconic revolutionary “hymn” –ed.*) are appropriate – “neither Caesar nor bourgeois nor God.” As for the believer, well, he can leave out the other two and remain with God. But neither Caesar nor bourgeois nor, above all, Caesar. And to be truthful, we have had no ambitions to be Caesar.

If the people are interested in our personal experience, we can say that nothing really gives more satisfaction than discussion, than looking for the best solutions through discussion. Nor is there, greater satisfaction than when everyone shares responsibility, when the Party shares it, when the people share it. I strongly believe this, I have the right to speak from having gone through this revolutionary period, from having assumed grave responsibilities in the Revolution, from never having become vain because of it, never having felt I was infallible and admitting that I can make mistakes.

People Write History

I believe that one of the most honest things any citizen, any revolutionary can do is to recognize not by words alone but sincerely that one can make mistakes – to say there are no Caesars, to say that no one is appointed by Providence, to say that one believes strongly that it's the people who write history, and who make history.

What often happens is that they don't mention the people! They refer to the people by the name of a leader, and millions of men die anonymously, and all the glory, all the prestige often falls on one man, on one individual, on one leader so that one attributes the merits of the people to the leader. This is wrong because a revolution is not made with the intelligence nor through the efforts of one man alone – it is made with the intelligence of many people, with the blood and sacrifice of many, with the blood and sacrifice of thousands of comrades who won the fight against the tyranny, with the blood and sacrifice of hundreds of comrades who won the fight against counter-revolution – who defeated imperialism – with the unselfish efforts and the self-sacrifice of those who go to the mountains for training, who shut themselves up in schools separated from their families for long months, of workers who cultivate the fields for hours in the sun, of workers who cut cane, of fisherman who fish, of conductors who drive trains, trucks – of workers who manage factories of workers who get up early in the morning to milk cows, to do some chore, or perform some service. These are the ones who make history, the fighters.

Who can credit himself with all the merit of millions of men who make up a society, who make up a people? Who can think that personal vanity and pride – however legitimate, it's still his pride only — are worth the effort and the sacrifice of millions? Whoever believes himself superior and so infallible as to feel this way is simply wrong.

There Are Many Camilos

I came here to tell the people what I believe, and I have defended it and contributed to removing all obstacles to it. Very seldom have we felt as we feel on this occasion that we have contributed something to the history of our country, to the progress of our country, and if all of us, if all the comrades with more responsibility in leadership – if we all respect these rules, if we all live by these principles, our country will enjoy a great future, our country will be spared the problems of provincialism, will be spared a thousand other problems. For one thing that nobody doubts is what was said about comrade Camilo at his death, that among the people "there are many Camilos." And nobody doubts it because Camilo worked for a tailor shop and left. Camilo would not have been Camilo without the Revolution, without a chance to fight. Give this young man the chance to fight and you will see that he is a Camilo, that he wins battles and displays courage.

The Party Must Be the Great Instrument of Merit

"There are many like Camilo among the people," we said that time. But what is valid for a military leader is also valid for everything else – it is also valid for all other responsibilities. There are thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of worthy men, of competent men among the people. Give them the chance to educate themselves, to train themselves, to learn, to lead, to work! Give them the chance and just as you'll see magnificent athletes, magnificent military leaders, magnificent students coming from the people, so will magnificent leaders, magnificent cadres, magnificent administrators, magnificent orators, magnificent writers, magnificent ministers, magnificent political leaders also arise! Let us accustom ourselves, in accordance with the times and in accordance with our Revolution, to seeing in the people the great virtues, the great minds, the great merits, knowing that there are

great reserves among them and that, therefore, they cannot fail! A man can fail, because a man is one. A people cannot fail, because there are thousands, because there are hundreds of thousands of minds, hundreds of thousands of potential leaders.

Then, what must the Party of that revolutionary people do? That Party must be the great instrument of merit, the great instrument of revolutionary vocation, the great instrument of revolutionary intelligence. That Party must always be above individuals because the Party is going to embody, not the value of one mind, but the value of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of minds – not the value of one heroism, but the value of the heroism of all – not the value of one spirit of sacrifice, but the value of the spirit of sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of citizens, of the fighting spirit, of love for the Revolution.

This is what the United Party of the Cuban Socialist Revolution must be!

1) Further study on this topic: (note from the editors of the Dowson archives)

“Fidel Castro denounces bureaucracy and sectarianism”—Speech of March 26, 1962 (on the disciplinary measures taken against the Stalinist leader Anibal Escalante).

2) “Trotskyism and the Cuban Revolution – An answer to *Hoy*” (the daily journal of the Cuban Communist Party, which published Escalante’s slanders against the Cuban Trotskyists). A pamphlet by Joseph Hansen, reprinted from *The Militant* (the SWP, New York weekly) by Pioneer Publishers. October 1962

SEE ALSO:

1968: **“Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War, by Che Guevara,”** Monthly Review Press, New York: (33 Episodes/Chapters and 26 Letters, including:

In Tribute to Che (speech by Fidel Castro – Oct. 28, 1967); Guevara: War and the Peasant Population; One Year of armed Struggle; The General Strike, the Final Offensive, and the Battle of Santa Clara.

“When Che Guevara cast his lot with Marxism and revolution the world of letters suffered an incalculable loss. Guevara ... is a brilliant, thoughtful writer. He is lucid, candid, and revealing ... If Guevara had spent his time at the typewriter instead of leading revolutionaries, then the world would be hailing a new giant of literature.” (*Cleveland Press*)